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How to Use Calipers to Measure Body Fat



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When it comes to losing weight, the scale can be misleading. If you're exercising in conjunction with your diet, you may also be building muscle, which is denser and heavier than fat. That's where body fat calipers are useful. Using a caliper to measure body fat can give you a much better idea of how well you're doing in reaching your target goal. Not only that, but they're cheap and easy to use. Below are step by step instructions on how to use calipers to measure body fat percentage.

Accu-Measure Fitness
3000 Personal Body Fat
Tester

Note that in this article, we will be using the Yuhasz technique, which uses six measurement sites (vs. 3 or 4 as recommended in other methods).

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderate

1. Buy a caliper.

Accu-measure body fat calipers are the most widely recommended calipers for informally measuring body fat percentage. These are very cheap, and can be bought off of Amazon. Other recommended calipers include Lafayette, Lange, or Harpenden (but expect to pay a lot more for these).

2. Use these basic measuring techniques.

Measure on the same side of your body, usually the right side. Test at the same time each day, and do not test directly after exercising.

Using your thumb and index finger, lift up a skinfold. Apply the caliper half an inch below your fingers. Release your fingers. Read the measurement.

Take the measurement within 5 seconds of using the caliper. Otherwise, you risk an underestimate.

You may wish to repeat each measurement 2-3 times, and use the average result in order to get the best accuracy.



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/TRICEP_Full.jpg)

3. Measure the triceps.

Your arms should be relaxed and hanging down.

This measurement is taken midway on the back of the upper arm. Record your results.



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/SUBSCAPULAR_Full.jpg)

4. Measure subscapular.

This measurement is taken just below the bottom point of the shoulder blade. Record your

results.

Things You'll Need:

- Calipers



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/SUPRASPINALE_Full.jpg)

5. Measure supraspinale.

This measurement is taken just above the hip, on the side of the body (in the intersection of the

iliac crest and armPit). Record your results.



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/ABDOMINAL_Full.jpg)

6. Measure abdominal.

This measurement is taken just next to the navel or belly button. Record your results.



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/THIGH_Full.jpg)

7. Measure the thigh.

Your knee should be slightly flexed, and your muscles should be relaxed. This measurement is taken on the front

of the upper thigh, over the quadriceps. Record your results.



(http://i.ehow.com/images/GlobalPhoto/Articles/5044963/CALF_Full.jpg)

8. Measure the calf.

This measurement is taken on the back, center of your calf, at the widest point. Record your results.

9. Calculate the results.

Now that you have your measurements, you need to use those measurements in a [formula \(#\)](#) to calculate body fat percentage. This is where it gets tricky. To get the most accurate results, you need to consider your gender, age, ethnicity, fitness level, and a variety of other variables. This is why this technique should be considered an estimate and not a fact.

If you would like to do the calculations yourself, keep reading. Otherwise, skip to step 11.

10. Do the math.

To do the calculations yourself, follow the following formula.

FOR MALES:

$(0.1051 \times \text{sum of triceps, subscapular, supraspinale, abdominal, thigh, calf}) + 2.585 = \text{Body Fat \%}$

FOR FEMALES:

$(0.1548 \times \text{sum of triceps, subscapular, supraspinale, abdominal, thigh, calf}) + 3.580 = \text{Body Fat \%}$

1. Pick a website to do the math for you.

If you prefer, you can find a website that uses the Yuhasz technique to calculate the results for you.

You simply fill in the required information, add your measurements, and click for the results.

2. Interpret the results.

The average man has a body fat percentage of around 17%, while the average woman has a body fat percentage of around 22%. Athletes generally have a lower body fat percentage, at as low as 6% for men and 12% for women.

What is most important is the change in your own body over time, since the actual amount is an estimate.

Tips & Warnings

- If you are clinically obese (according to BMI), this method may be ineffective at determining body fat percentage.
- Body fat calipers give you an ESTIMATE of your fat percentage. There is room for error if done incorrectly.

Comments

jrofoso1 said

on 7/27/2009 I need to but this so I can try it I really want to great article 5*

ttbirdie said

on 7/2/2009 Excellent article, 5*

bostontech said

on 5/26/2009 Great information, more info than I've found anywhere else on the subject.

sonni57 said

on 5/24/2009 Thanks for the detailed info on how to use calipers to get fat percentage.