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To: Food Service Directors

From: Fran O'Donnell

Subject: BMI

Body Mass Index or BMI is used as the current standard for evaluating if a person is achieving a healthy weight. It is a mathematical calculation used to determine which of four categories a person falls into. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has a web site where you just enter your height and current weight and it calculates your BMI rather than you doing the math. BMI is calculated by dividing a person's body weight in pounds by his or her height in inches squared, then multiplying that number by 703. Knowledge of this website is good information to have if you are doing a presentation on health and nutrition. It also provides access to other health/nutrition issues. The website is [www.cdc.gov/bmi](http://www.cdc.gov/bmi).

There are a few important considerations to note. One is that BMI can be misleading for very muscular people, as well as women who are pregnant or lactating. BMI may overestimate body fat in those cases. Conversely, it may underestimate body fat in older people who have lost muscle mass.

Remember, when doing a presentation, that BMI is a tool. It does not always accurately describe an adult's weight classification. A doctor or health care professional should make the final determination.

Also BMI is calculated differently for children than for adults. Weight categories are described differently too. Because boys and girls grow at different rates, BMI for children is age- and gender-specific and must be calculated for each child on an individual basis. BMI tables should not be used to evaluate the BMI for a child; there are too many variables.