



# Natural Body Weight

**Lesson Objectives – Students define natural body weight and identify at least three ways to achieve it.**

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<b>Total Time</b> .....	<b><u>23 min.</u></b>	

**Equipment & Materials**

- ✓ “Healthy Lifestyle Profile” in Appendix HS-2A, p. 147.
- ✓ Healthy Behavior posters with headings as described in “Statements for Healthy Behavior Posters,” Appendix HS-2B, pp. 148-154. (Have these posted in the room before the lesson begins.)
- ✓ Green sticker dots, three for each student.

**Teacher Preparation**

Prior to the start of this class:

- ✓ Make copies of the “Healthy Lifestyle Profile,” one for each student.
- ✓ Create and post the posters.

**Additional Preparation**

This lesson may generate discussion that reveals a risk of eating disorders among students. Before presenting the lesson, verify procedures for referring a student for evaluation and intervention.

*This lesson addresses the following content standards:*

Michigan Standards		National Standards	
<i>Physical Education</i>	<i>Health Education</i>	<i>Physical Education</i>	<i>Health Education</i>
Standard #12	Standard #1	Standard #7	Standard #1
Standard #14	Standard #5		Standard #6

***This lesson relates to Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education:***

Grades 9-12 Lessons: “Help Yourself to Good Nutrition” and “Stay Physically Active–For Life.”

**Key Message & Background Information for Teachers****Key Messages:**

I believe there is no such thing as a “perfect” body size and/or shape.

I value my body and do my best to keep it healthy, especially by eating healthy foods and being physically active.

**Background Information:**

Many people are familiar with the concept of “ideal” body weight. We have seen the weight charts that specify “ideal” weight ranges according to gender, height, and sometimes “frame size.” One of the main problems with “ideal” weights is that they imply that weight is synonymous with health.

For example, a person may have achieved “ideal weight” through unhealthy or even dangerous dieting. A better approach is to use the concept of “natural” body weight. “Natural” body weight is the weight one achieves through a healthy lifestyle, specifically eating well and getting ample physical activity. Shifting the focus from “ideal” to “natural” body weight means encouraging people to stop focusing on numbers on a scale and start focusing on establishing healthy lifestyle habits. Although improving nutrition and physical activity patterns may not lead to weight loss, they will translate to better health overall.

**Prepare Students****5 min.**

**Gather** students together in a group.

**Introduce** the lesson:

- Today we’re going to take a bit of time to think about what that number on the scale really means and then learn about a better way of thinking about our body weights.

**Attention Grabber****5 min.**

**Ask** students:

- “If you weigh yourself, what does the number on the scale really mean—what does it measure?” (Students respond. May say “weight,” or “fat,” etc.)

**Explain** to students:

- Our bodies are made up of bone, muscle, fat, and water—among other things. Every person has fluctuation in weight every day because of gains and losses in water. When you are growing, weight is added in bones, muscle and some fat as well.
- The important point here is that weight, as recorded by a scale, is a fairly meaningless measurement. In fact, many people interpret changes on a scale as changes in how fat they are. This is generally not true.

- Because every body is unique, it's impossible to say how much someone should weigh. It's also very difficult to measure how healthy someone is by a number on a scale.
- Scales can be useful for looking at how our weight changes over time, but they are very limited in helping us understand our overall health.

**Natural Body Weight****12 min.****Explain/Demonstrate****Practice**

**Explain** to students:

- You are going to rate your own healthy behaviors. Before you do that, we need to think about weight and health.
- Many people tend to decide on a weight they think they should be, and then do whatever it takes to get to that weight. Doing “whatever it takes” can be very destructive. It can result in obsession with thinness. This can interfere with social relationships and can lead to eating disorders.
  - Many people want to look like models or media stars who have abnormally thin bodies.
  - Many people believe they should be a certain weight, then beat themselves up if they are heavier than that.
- Instead of deciding what our weight should be, we should do everything we can to take care of our bodies and live a healthy lifestyle. This includes two factors that we know influence body weight: eating well and being physically active.
- Having a healthy lifestyle will allow our bodies to achieve their “natural body weight.”

**Define** natural body weight using the definition below.

**Definition:**

*Natural body weight*—the weight a person's body goes to when he/she has healthy eating and physical activity patterns.

**Continue** explanation:

- Instead of focusing on weight, the *natural body weight* approach allows us to focus on being healthy.
- We trust that whatever weight our bodies are when we are doing our best to take care of them—especially eating well and being physically active—is the weight that is right for us.
- Note that our “natural body weight” may be different than what we envision as our “ideal.”
- If everyone were at a natural body weight, people would still come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some people naturally would be smaller and some people would naturally be bigger.
- The goal for each person should be to make the best possible lifestyle choices, and not to reach a specific weight.

**Introduce** the “Healthy Lifestyle Profile” worksheets.

**Hand out** the “Healthy Lifestyles Profile” worksheets and three stickers for each student.

**Instruct** students on completing the profile (review directions at the top of the handout.) Emphasize that this is a personal exercise. There should be no discussion or comparison among students during the exercise.

**Direct** students’ attention to the posters displayed around the room, and explain:

- Your job is to go to the posters for the three behaviors you feel you do best, and put one of your stickers on each of them.

**Posters will have the following labels:**

- I eat when I am hungry and stop eating when I’m full.
- I eat at least 2.5 cups of vegetables (not including french fries) daily.
- I eat at least 1.5 cups of fruit daily.
- I am physically active (includes walking, running, bicycling, dancing, etc.) for one hour daily. Note: The 60 minutes don’t have to be all at once.
- I eat a nutritious breakfast daily.
- I limit foods with lots of added fat or sugar (like ice cream, chips, french fries, cakes, cookies, pies, etc.)
- I limit soft drinks to no more than one per day.
- I have at least 3 cups of low-fat milk or dairy products daily.
- I choose ways to be more active (like walking up stairs instead of taking the elevator and walking or biking instead of taking the car).
- I limit my leisure “screen time” to one hour or less each day. (Screen time includes television, video games and computers. Note: leisure screen time does not include time spent using computers for homework.)
- I drink several glasses of water every day.

**Debrief** the activity by reviewing the posters with the class.

**Note** areas where the majority of students are doing well (e.g., “It’s great to see that most of us eat breakfast . . .”), as well as areas that need help (e.g., “Only a few of us think we eat enough fruit.”)

**Have** students brainstorm strategies for improvement (e.g., they could carry fruit in their backpack so a healthy snack is available throughout the day).

***Teacher tip:** For an additional activity, have students write an action plan based on one (or two) low score(s) from their Healthy Lifestyles Profile.*

**Review****3 min.**

**Close** the lesson by doing the following:

- Tell students that the “Healthy Lifestyle Profile” is a much better indicator of their health than the scale that measures their weight.
- Ask students to take it home with them and periodically rate themselves.

**Emphasize:**

- It’s unhealthy for us to decide what weight we should be and then try to manipulate our bodies into getting to that weight.
- It’s much better to take care of our bodies and let our bodies choose the weight that’s best.



## Healthy Lifestyle Profile

Directions: Give yourself a number score for how often you do each behavior (0=never, 1= sometimes, 2=most of the time). Put stars next to the three behaviors that you think you do best.

Healthy Behavior	Rate as follows: 0=never, 1=sometimes, 2=most of the time							
	Today	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
	I eat when I am hungry and stop eating when I'm full.							
I eat 2.5 cups of vegetables (not including french fries) daily.								
I eat 1.5 cups of fruit daily.								
I am physically active (includes walking, running, bicycling, dancing, etc.) for one hour daily. (Note: The 60 minutes don't have to be all at once.)								
I eat a nutritious breakfast daily.								
I limit foods with lots of added fat or sugar (like ice cream, chips, french fries, cakes, cookies, pies,								
I limit soft drinks to no more than one per day.								
I have 3 cups of low-fat milk or dairy products every day.								
I choose ways to be more active (like walking up stairs instead of taking the elevator and walking or biking instead of taking the car).								
I limit my leisure "screen time" to one hour or less each day. (Screen time includes television, video games, and computers. Leisure screen time does not include time spent using computers for homework.)								
I drink several glasses of water every day.								
<b>Total Healthy Lifestyle Profile Score:</b>								

**If you scored:**

- 22
- 20-21
- 18-19
- Under 18

**Consider yourself:**

- Making healthy choices.
- Doing well, but you could do better.
- Needing some changes.
- Definitely needing to make some changes.

Statements for Healthy Behavior Posters

I eat when I am hungry and  
stop eating when I am full.

I eat at least 2.5 cups of  
vegetables daily.

*\*(not including french fries)*

I eat at least 1.5 cups of  
fruit daily.

# I am physically active for one hour daily.

Note: This includes walking, running, bicycling, dancing, etc. The 60 minutes is cumulative; it doesn't have to be all at once. For example, if it takes 20 minutes to walk to school and a student walks both to and from school, then only 20 additional minutes are needed to get to the goal.

I eat a nutritious breakfast daily.

I limit my consumption of foods with lots of added fat and sugar (like ice cream, french fries, cakes, cookies, pies, etc.).

I limit my soft drinks to no more than one per day.

I have at least 3 cups of low-fat milk or dairy products every day.

I choose ways to be more active (like walking upstairs instead of taking the elevator and walking or biking instead of taking the car).

I hardly ever have more  
than one hour of leisure  
“screen time.”

(Screen time includes television, video games, and computers. Note that leisure screen time does not include time spent using computers for homework.)

I drink plenty of water  
every day.