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Measuring progress

Self-Assessments

Measuring progress is an important part of motivation. There's nothing like success to help you stay on track. Regular progress checks can also be useful in revising your goals to make further improvements.

The OPTIFAST® Program emphasizes physical activity as a key component of a healthy lifestyle. It is more important to monitor your physical activity than to know your physical fitness level. However, as you increase your level of physical activity, your physical fitness will improve. This will increase your functional capability and make you feel more energetic. As you become more fit, routine tasks like grocery shopping and climbing stairs become easier to do without fatigue.

This module discusses several self assessments you can do to monitor changes in your physical fitness and body composition. You don't have to go to a health club or clinic to do these assessments. You can do them in the privacy of your own home.

Heart Rate

Your heart rate or pulse rate indicates the number of times your heart beats in a given period of time. You can monitor your heart rate easily during physical activity or while at rest.

The pulse is a wave initiated by the heart that travels through the arteries each time the heart beats. In most people, the pulse can be felt wherever a large artery lies near the surface—at the temple, neck, wrist, and on the chest near the heart.

Your heart rate changes throughout the day. It is lowest after you have been sleeping for about six hours. Upon awakening, it increases 5 to 10 beats per minute. During the day, the resting pulse gradually increases. At bedtime, it is probably 5 to 10 beats higher than in the morning.

Like any other muscle, your heart becomes stronger as you become more physically fit. It becomes more efficient, pumping more blood with each beat. The resting heart rate decreases because of the increased stroke volume.

tools for success

- Measure your heart rate at rest and during physical activity.
- Perform a simple walking test to measure improvement in your cardiovascular fitness.
- Measure your body circumferences and calculate your waist-to-hip ratio.

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Resting Heart Rate

The best time to take your resting heart rate is before you get out of bed in the morning. Count your pulse for a full 60 seconds or for 30 seconds and multiply by two. Measure your resting heart rate over three mornings and take the average of the three values.

Use the chart below to evaluate your resting heart rate.

	Beats per Minute	
	Men	Women
Superior	Less than 48	Less than 53
Excellent	48-55	53-60
Good	56-65	61-70
Fair	66-79	71-84
Poor	80-90	85-95
Very Poor	Over 90	Over 95

A low resting heart rate is not always an indication that someone is highly fit. People who take certain medications, like beta blockers for hypertension, may have a lower heart rate at rest and during activity. If you are sedentary and unfit, don't be discouraged: your resting heart rate will decrease as you become more physically fit.

Heart Rate During Physical Activity

Your heart rate during physical activity indicates the intensity of the activity you are doing. To take your pulse at the neck, temple, or wrist, place the first two fingers gently on the artery. Use the palm of your hand if taking your pulse over your heart. Count the number of times your heart beats in 10 seconds and multiply by 6. This is your number of beats per minute. Begin counting immediately when you stop the physical activity, since the heart rate begins to decrease as soon as you stop. Move around while taking your pulse to avoid having blood "pool" in your legs, causing light-headedness.

Assessing Physical Fitness

There are several types of fitness: cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. Moderate physical activity will

primarily promote cardiovascular endurance or aerobic fitness. This type of fitness is related to reducing the risk of several chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and even some cancers.

The most accurate way to measure physical fitness is an exercise test administered in a laboratory. These tests may be expensive and must be performed by a physician or trained technician. Other fitness tests can be performed at health clubs and worksite health promotion programs. If you have access to these types of resources, you may want to have a fitness test performed.

A Simple walking test

You can monitor your improvement in fitness with a simple walking test. It is safe and not too strenuous.

Tips for Performing The Walking Test

- Review the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ) before you perform the walking test. The PARQ is included in the Becoming More Active LES module. If there has been a change in your health since your last doctor visit, you may want to check again to be sure it is safe for you to perform this test.
- If you experience unusual pain or discomfort during any part of the walking test, STOP IMMEDIATELY and consult your physician.
- Wait at least one or two hours after your last meal before performing assessments.
- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing and comfortable, well padded shoes suitable for walking. Perform a few stretches to warm up before starting the walking test.
- If you are doing the walking test outdoors in a hot climate, test during the morning or late afternoon hours to avoid the heat. Do not

perform this test outdoors when it is especially cold, windy, or smoggy.

- Learn to take your pulse and practice before conducting the assessments.

Taking the Test

- You'll need a watch with a second hand to take this test.
- Find a course that takes you 4-6 minutes to complete. It doesn't have to be flat, and you don't need to know the distance. You don't have to walk it fast or at any particular speed.
- Walk the course. Time how long it takes you to cover the course to the nearest second. Take your pulse for 10 seconds immediately after finishing the walk, and multiply by 6 to obtain beats per minute. Record both how long it took you to complete the walk and your heart rate.
- After a few weeks, repeat the test exactly the same way. If you have been consistent about increasing your physical activity level, you should notice changes. Your time for the same course should decrease, your heart rate should be lower immediately after the walk, or both changes may occur.

Assessing Body Weight

During the first few weeks of the active weight loss phase of the program, you may be tempted to weigh yourself every day to see your progress. Resist the temptation.

We suggest that you weigh yourself no more than once a week. Since weight doesn't change more than one pound a day, even during the active weight loss phase. Frequent weighing may cause you to become discouraged. In addition, the scale doesn't always give an accurate picture of your progress, especially if you check it every day.

When weighing yourself at home:

- Weigh at the same time of day.
- Wear the same clothing (minimal with no shoes)
- Place the scale on a flat, hard, uncarpeted surface.
- Record your weight to the nearest 1/2 pound.

Circumference Measurements

Another way to track your progress is to measure body circumferences. These measures might also help you to discover where your body tends to store excess fat.

You will need a flexible tape that doesn't stretch. It's best to obtain these measurements without clothing or in your underwear. Taking the measurements in front of a mirror will help you determine if the tape is positioned properly on your body for accurate measurements.

Follow these procedures when measuring circumferences:

- Stand very straight with your feet together.
- Do not compress the skin with the tape measure.
- Take three measures to ensure accuracy.
- Record measurements to the nearest 1/4 inch.

Waist:

Place the tape measure around your body in a horizontal plane at the level of your natural waist. This should be midway between the lower ribs and the top of your hipbone. Take the measurement with the abdomen relaxed, at the end of a normal breath (exhale).

Hip:

Place the tape measure around your hips in a horizontal plane at the level of the maximum (widest) extension of the buttocks. Take the measurement with the abdomen relaxed.

Chest:

Place the tape measure around your chest in a horizontal plane at nipple level. Take the measurement between inhaling and exhaling.

Upper Arm:

Place the tape measure around the right upper arm (biceps) midway between the shoulder and the elbow, with the elbow fully extended.

Thigh:

Place the tape measure around the right thigh at the largest area of the thigh just below the gluteal fold.

Waist-to-Hip Ratio (W/H Ratio)

The waist to hip ratio assesses the distribution of fat on the body. The higher the waist to hip ratio, the greater the risk of certain diseases.

Divide the waist measurement in inches by the hip measurement in inches to obtain a ratio.

Example:

Waist	34 inches
Hip	42 inches
Ratio	.81

Research in adults suggests that ratios close to or above 0.8 for women and 1.0 for men are linked with increased risk for several chronic diseases such as metabolic syndrome, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. As you lose weight this ratio will improve, reducing your risk for disease.

key goals

Using the tips in this module, develop 2 – 3 goals to work towards.

1

2

3

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Lifestyle Inventory

In addition to assessing your eating and physical activity habits, it is important to be aware of other lifestyle habits that may be related to your overall health. Answer the questions below, then use your score and the questions to examine your lifestyle and identify changes you may need to make to ensure optimal health.

Y/N	
	Are you a non smoker and non user of other tobacco products?
	Do you find it easy to handle challenges, responsibilities, and assignments that are not part of your daily routine?
	Do you participate in activities that promote relaxation and enjoyment (community activities, hobbies, recreation, church, relaxation techniques)?
	Are you able to remain patient and calm during stressful situations without taking drugs, medication, or alcohol?
	Is the majority of your time free from boredom?
	Do you usually fasten your seat belt when you're in an automobile?
	Do you limit your consumption of alcohol to one drink a day for women or two drinks per day for men?
	Do you ever drive when you've been drinking alcohol (when you're still feeling the effects)?
	Do you keep chemicals, medicines, and harmful materials secured and properly stored in your home?
	Do you have fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in your home?
	Do you always take medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor?
	Do you see your doctor for an annual checkup and preventive exams (mammogram, Pap test, colorectal exams, etc.)?
	Do you perform appropriate self examinations (breast exams for women, testicular exams for men)?
	Do you see the dentist twice per year to have your teeth cleaned and examined?

Scoring: Score 1 point for each YES answer. Your Score _____

Scoring Guide

14 Points: Congratulations! You're practicing many excellent lifestyle habits.

12–13 Points: You're practicing many positive lifestyle habits and can continue to make a few changes.

10–11 Points: You're practicing positive lifestyle habits but need to change some of your habits.

8–9 Points: You have several lifestyle habits that you need to alter to reach a positive level of wellness.

Below 8 Points: You need to seriously consider making positive changes to improve your lifestyle.

Remember some changes are more difficult to make than others. If you need to install a smoke detector or reorganize the cleaning supplies in your garage, that could be a Saturday morning project. Other changes, like stopping smoking, require a major effort. It's best not to undertake too many major lifestyle changes at one time.

Since you are concentrating on losing weight and increasing your physical activity, don't add another major change at this time. Focus on the areas identified in this Inventory that would be relatively easy for you to change. Later, you'll be able to tackle more difficult areas and apply some of the strategies that you learn in the program to help you make positive changes in other areas of your life.

Personal **Progress** Chart

Name _____ Program Start Date _____

Height _____ inches

Measures	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Weight (lbs.)							
Resting Pulse (beats per minute)							
Walking Test - Time (min/sec) - Pulse (bpm)							
Waist (in.)							
Hip (in.)							
W/H Ratio							
Chest (in.)							
Upper Arm (in.)							
Thigh (in.)							