



Taking skinfold measurements is a common method for determining body fat composition. Typically, the amount of fat under the skin is a fair indication of the fat that is stored throughout your body. It is a great way for tracking your progress through a training program.

Skin folds are used primarily in athletic populations where increased muscle mass and optimal fat mass levels are required and achieved through measured exercise and diet. However, they can be a great tool for monitoring your own fat mass when they are performed correctly.

Fat tissue is found throughout the body, both under the skin and also around your organs. The fat around your organs is much more dangerous for your health. Skin fold measurement in conjunction with BMI & waist circumference measures are very useful for determining overall fat mass.

Measurement can use from 3 to 9 different standard anatomical sites around the body. The right side is usually only measured (for consistency).

How to understand the results

Because of the increased errors involved in skin folds, it is usually not appropriate to convert skinfold measures to percentage body fat (%BF). It is best to use the sum of several sites to monitor and compare body fat measures.

The best way is to have your skinfolds measured every 3-4 weeks and use the results over time to determine how your training is progressing. A smaller number each time indicates fat loss.

What about muscle mass?

To ensure you aren't losing muscle as well as fat, you can measure the girth of your limbs and chest where the skinfold sites are taken. Ask your Healthwise representative about calculating muscle girth in conjunction with skinfold measurements.

What are normal results?

		Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor
Normal	Male	60-80	81-90	91-110	111-150	150+
	Female	70-90	91-100	101-120	121-150	150+
Athletic	Male	40-60	61-80	81-100	101-130	130+
	Female	50-70	71-85	86-110	111-130	130+

What about people who are naturally thin?

There are always differences between people and their levels of fat under the skin. Some people can be quite lean naturally, while others struggle to keep the weight off. Just because someone has very little fat under their skin doesn't mean they are safe. People who are naturally thin will still deposit significant amounts of fat around their organs which adversely affects their health. Therefore, regardless of your skin fold results participation in exercise, and eating healthy foods is more important than the extra 2mm of skinfold.

Ask your Healthwise rep about having your skinfolds taken to help track your progress and to give you great feedback on the effort you are putting into training and healthy eating.

References:

International Standards for Anthropometric Assessment (2001) published by The International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK)

