

Genes are only part of what shapes your body—the rest is up to you!

# What's your weight fate?

Seemingly harmless habits can affect what size you'll be 5 or 10 years from now. Peek into your future with our quiz, designed with Barry Popkin, Ph.D. Then learn what behaviors to tweak to stay lean for life. We see...body success, straight ahead! **By Maridel Reyes**

## PART 1 Take the quiz!

### 1 What is your body-mass index?

BMI is a measure of your body fat. If you aren't sure of yours, use this formula: (weight in pounds) x 703 / (height in inches<sup>2</sup>) or go to [Self.com/calculators/programs/calculators/body-mass-index](http://Self.com/calculators/programs/calculators/body-mass-index).

Underweight: below 18.5 **+1**      Normal: 18.5 to 24.9 **+12**  
Overweight: 25 to 30 **+40**      Obese: greater than 30 **+64**  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

### 2 Is your mother overweight or obese?

Yes **+4**      No **+1**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Your risk of becoming obese spikes 41 percent if your mom is, a study in the journal *Pediatrics* reveals. Same-sex family relationships have a large effect on weight, while the effect of opposite-sex ones is less clear.

### 3 Do you get less than six hours of sleep per night?

Yes **+4**      No **+1**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Sleep deprivation increases levels of the hunger hormone ghrelin and also cuts levels of the fullness hormone leptin. A lack of shut-eye may even trigger cravings for carbs such as chips and candy.

### 4 How old were you when your period started?

12 or younger **+5**      13 **+3**  
14 or older **+1**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Women who got their first period before age 12 weighed about 22 more pounds as adults than those who began menstruating after age 14, a study from Tulane University in New Orleans reports.

### 5 When dining in a group, do you eat the fastest?

Yes, I'm usually the speediest eater. **+4**  
I eat at a normal speed. **+1**  
No, I eat slowly and typically push my plate away last. **-1**  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

People who eat quickly until full are three times more likely to be overweight than others, a study from Osaka University in Japan notes. Satiety signals take 30 minutes to set in, so speedy eaters can get overly full before their tummy has time to say, "Stop!"

### 6 How often do you prepare your own meals?

Frequently **+1**      About half the time **+2**  
Rarely **+5**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

The more often you eat out, the more likely you are to carry excess weight, research suggests. Fast food tends to have more fat and sugar, says Popkin, author of *The World Is Fat* (Penguin). Sit-down restaurants are better, but their oversize dishes still contain more fat and calories than home-cooked fare.

### 7 Are you an ex-smoker?

Yes **+4**      No **+1**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Kicking butts is great for your health, but quitters gained about 21 more pounds than nonsmokers over five years, a study from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor finds. Nicotine, which makes smoking addictive, may also curb your appetite and affect your metabolism, so you may be hungrier and burn fewer calories.

### 8 How do you commute to work?

I drive. **+5**      I take the bus or the train. **+3**  
I walk or bike. **-1**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Fifty-one percent of people who drive to their job are obese or overweight, compared with 43 percent of people who use other means, a study in the *International Journal of Obesity* indicates.

### 9 How many hours of TV do you watch per week?

0-1 **+0**      2-5 **+1**      6-20 **+2**  
21-40 **+5**      41 or more **+8**      SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

For each two-hour increase in television viewing per week, your risk for obesity jumps 23 percent, according to a study from Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

# healthy living NEED TO KNOW

## >> 10 Do you eat breakfast?

Always +1 Sometimes +3 Never +4 SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

People who get more of their calories at breakfast gain less weight than people who skip it or eat less. A.M. eaters have more stable blood glucose levels during the day, so they resist snacks better.

## 11 How many times a week do you exercise for 30 minutes or more?

Zero +5 Once or twice a week +2  
Three or four times a week +1 Five or more -1 SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

The more time you stay sedentary, the higher your risk for obesity may be, a study in the *International Journal of Obesity* suggests.

## 12 How many caloric drinks (soda, juice, energy drinks, alcohol, sweetened tea) do you have daily?

Zero -1 One or two +3  
Three or four +10 Five or more +20 SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Women gulp 456 calories on average per day, Popkin's research shows. Your body won't register liquid calories the same way it does for food, so you may still be hungry after sipping a calorie bomb.

## 13 How much stress do you experience daily?

Not much. I try to stay calm. -2  
About average. I have good days and frantic days. +5  
I'm always under pressure. +10 SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Chronic stress could cause fat buildup, especially around your abs, an animal study in *Nature Medicine* notes; it may cause your body to secrete a hormone that triggers the growth of fat cells.

## 14 The 4 P.M. munchies strike. What do you grab?

Nothing—I'll wait them out. +2  
A bag of chips or a fistful of candy +10  
Lowfat yogurt, a piece of fruit or a few nuts. +1 SCORE \_\_\_\_\_  
Packaged snacks can be high in fat and low in satiating fiber. Reach for nothing, though, and you'll likely overdo it later on.

**TOTAL SCORE** \_\_\_\_\_

## PART 2 Tally your points

If you scored...	2-75	76-114	115-152
Your weight fate is...	<b>Normal</b> The future looks light! Still, even normal-weight women gain about a pound a year as they age. Tune up with tips from Part 3 to seal your slim fate.	<b>Overweight</b> You're headed for expansion, but no worries: A few adjustments can alter your destiny. Circle your big scores and seek the slimming solutions below.	<b>Obese</b> Don't panic! Your size isn't written in the stars. Read Part 3 for a list of slenderizing shifts. One tweak a week yields better habits in three months.

## PART 3 Change your weight fate!

Our cheat sheet targets the most effective ways to make a difference. Retake the quiz every month at [Self.com](http://Self.com) to track your progress.

### IMPROVE YOUR EATING

**Write off weight.** To lower BMI, keep a food journal. Jotting down all bites is the top predictor of weight loss.

**Befriend a farmer.** Shop at a farmers' market to balance your diet (lots of produce, no packaged snacks!). Locate one at [www.apps.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets](http://www.apps.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets).

**Eat heartily in the A.M.** Make your morning meal the main one. Aim for up to 500 calories. Studies show big breakfasts can keep you small.

**Start cookin'.** Prepare at least half of your meals at home. It's one of the best methods to ensure you take in more vegetables and less fat.

**Snack smarter.** Stop smoking and munch right to help your body stay at a healthy weight. For every cup of fruit and vegetables quitters add to their daily diet,

they reduce their chances of gaining weight by 13 percent, a study in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* reports.

**Cut calories in your cup.** Limit yourself to one glass daily of soda or alcohol. Replacing caloric beverages with water can help you drop up to 20 pounds in a year, Popkin says.

### GET YOUR BRAIN ON BOARD

**Chill.** Relaxing daily can lower the stress hormones that spur overeating, a study from Harvard Medical School in Boston finds. Carve out 20 minutes each day to commune with nature: Regular visits to areas with trees reduce stress.

**Swap reruns for sleep.** Replace half an hour of television watching with additional shut-eye daily and you'll wake up with lower levels of hunger hormones. Plus, it's easier to make

healthy choices when you're rested and energized.

**Pace yourself.** Slow down at meals so your mind has time to register fullness before you go back for seconds.

### MOVE MORE

**Hoof it.** Can't change your commute from car to foot? Achieve a similar effect by

delivering news to coworkers in person, not via email.

**Firm up.** Muscle burns calories even as you rest, but women older than age 35 lose about a quarter pound of muscle per year. Fight the loss by adding three sessions of metabolism-revving strength training to your weekly routine.



**Log to lose!** Find out how many calories your body needs each day, then enter every bite easily at [Self.com/mylogs](http://Self.com/mylogs).

