

# **Pounds or Pants – Measuring Weight Loss Success**

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How can you measure weight loss success?

Some people measure success by pounds lost on the scale. Others like to use a tape measure to track body measurements. Others choose to be professionally tested using skin calipers or hydrostatic weighing. Still others use the fit of their clothes or the compliments they receive. There are pros and cons for each of these methods, so it is important to understand them all in order to determine which one works best for you.

### **1) The Scale**

It sure can be motivating when the needle moves to the left. But what if you are including some strength training in your exercise program and building muscle? Your weight may remain steady (or even go up) as the composition of your body changes. So you may be looking better, but the scale isn't showing your success. This can be really frustrating!

Also, during weight loss, you may reach a plateau. Your body isn't a computer and may not lose weight with the kind of precision you'd like. You may not show a weight loss for a few weeks and then show a fairly dramatic loss all of a sudden. If you go by the numbers on the scale alone, you may become discouraged.

### **2) Tape Measure**

The tape measure method can be very motivating or very discouraging, depending on who's doing the measuring and the results you get. We often begin a weight loss program so unhappy with our bodies that the thought of taking measurements is nothing short of terrifying. Although it may serve as an effective benchmark, many of us may find it a discouraging way to begin our program. If the initial measurements won't be too upsetting, tracking inches can be more motivating than tracking pounds because you can see that the shape of your body is changing, even if the numbers on the scale don't show the change.

If you do want to go the tape measure route, make sure that you take your measurements at the same time and same day from month to month. This will allow you to see progress and avoid measuring excess water retention due to PMS, etc. Measure your upper arm, upper thigh, waist, hip and bust. Try to be consistent about where you measure so that you can accurately see your hard work paying off.

### **3) High tech Body Fat Measurements (Calipers, Hydrostatic weighing)**

These technologies have the benefit of more accurately measuring the overall composition of your body. Watching as your body fat percentage goes down can be very motivating, even if your weight stays consistent.

However, both of these techniques involve having a professional involved in the measurements, which is probably unrealistic for most people. Also, measurements using skin calipers also depends on the expertise and precision of the person doing the tests and can vary from expert to expert.

### **4) "Skinny" Jeans Test**

Some people feel that the best way to judge weight loss and fitness success is by noting how they fit and feel in their clothes. If this option resonates with you, find a specific pair of pants that they're trying to fit into. It doesn't matter if, when you start out, you can't even get them past your knees. From week to week, on a consistent day of the week and time of day, try on the pants and notice how they fit. If they couldn't go past your knees and now they do, that's progress! If they're over your knees and creeping up your thighs, good for you!

### **5) Compliment Test**

Receiving a compliment can make your day. But choosing compliments as your success measure can be dangerous. You may not get all of the compliments that you'd like as many of the people in your life may be too preoccupied with other thoughts, or feel uncomfortable commenting on your appearance. Many people feel that by noticing your smaller size, they are drawing attention to the fact that at one point you were heavier. Others may be jealous of your weight loss success.

The best person to try to impress is yourself. You know your body best and can recognize how it's changing as a result of your hard work. So choose a way to measure your success that's unique and personal for you, but feel free to enjoy the compliments when they do come your way!

Consider which method makes the most sense for you, and which would be most motivating. Commit to one of these measures and take the time to track your success on a regular basis. The idea is to see the success and feel proud, inspired, and happy with your results.



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