Body Composition: Waist-to-Hip Ratio

We describe the relative amounts of fat-free mass (like muscle) to fat mass as **body composition**. One way of estimating healthy body composition is waist-to-hip ratios.

**What is it?**
Waist-to-hip ratios are the best way of predicting the your fat distribution—essentially, the amount of fat around your abdomen. You may decide to use it in creating fitness goals!

**How do I do it?**
Use a tape measure to measure the smallest part of your waist, then measure the widest part of your hips, around the bum. The ratio is the first number divided by the second number.

**What does it mean?**
Generally, it is suggested that the optimal waist-to-hip ratio is less than .94 for men, and .82 for women, because there are some health risks that are associated with having excess fat around your tummy. But don’t forget that body composition is the result of factors such as gender, heredity, and physical activity and eating habits! Everyone’s body shape will be different.

**What can I do to manage my waist-hip-ratio and lose fat?**

1. There is no such thing as “spot treatment” when it comes to burning fat! For example, doing just abdomen exercises won’t help you lose tummy fat. A **combination of calorie-burning cardio and strength training exercises** is your best bet if you’re looking to reduce fat.

2. Remember that changes in body composition take time! Make realistic **short-term goals that focus on other factors** to keep you on track in your wellness plan.

3. **One quick strength exercise for core**: when you are sitting, take some time to engage and activate your abdominal muscles. Do this by imagining that you are drawing your belly button towards your spine, rather than sucking up into the ribcage.

4. A healthy lifestyle means combining exercise with good nutrition! Check out the **Healthy Recipe series** at hr.ubc.ca/health/health-and-wellbeing/health-recipes/