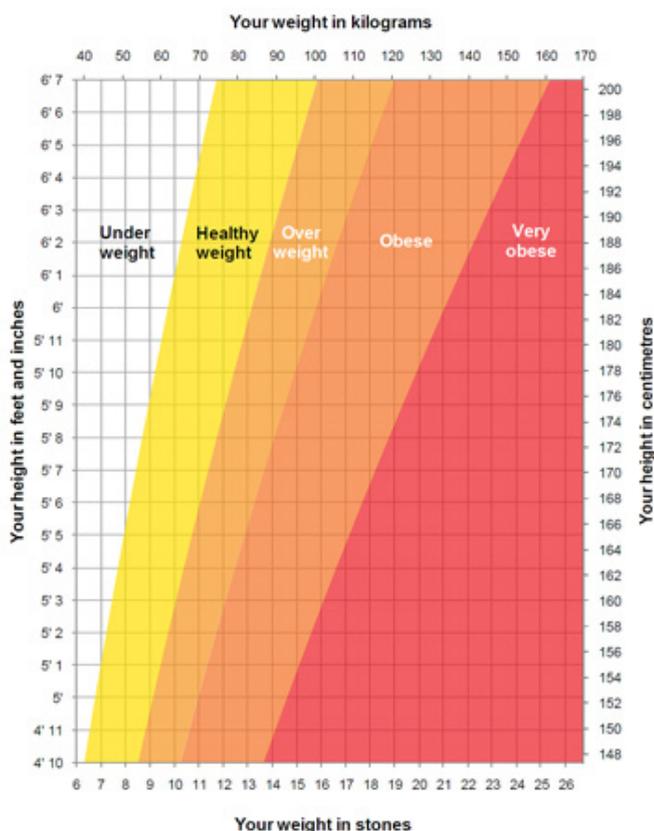


# Effects of being overweight on joint replacement surgery

Before your GP refers you for consideration for knee or hip replacement surgery there are a number of issues that must be considered.

There is some scientific research that shows there is a higher chance of having complications following surgery for patients who have a high body mass index (BMI). Your BMI is a measure of your weight compared to your height and should be approximately 19 - 25 in healthy people. This would mean for a person who is 5 foot 7 inches or 172cm tall they should be between 8 stone 7lbs to 11 stone 5lbs or 55-70kg. The chart below shows the healthy and unhealthy BMI range.



The list opposite shows what complications may occur after surgery for people who have a higher BMI.

These complications may include:

- **Infection:** This can affect the incision / cut and the joint and can cause redness, pain, swelling and excess scar tissue formation. This can sometimes mean the joint needs removing. One study found that the risk of infection for those with a BMI of more than 30 may increase by more than 6 times in knee replacements and more than 4 times in hip replacements.
- **Increased blood loss** during the operation due to more tissue having to be cut.
- **Poor alignment of the replacement joint** as bone shape is harder to see.
- **Nerve and soft tissue damage** due to more difficulty locating the nerves, ligaments, tendons etc during surgery.
- **Deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism.** These are blood clots either in the legs or the lungs and can be life threatening.
- **Requirement for repeated surgery** due to failure / loosening of the new joint.
- **Longer operation duration** as it can be more difficult to access the joint and control bleeding.

It is important that you understand these increased risks before you agree to a referral by your GP for hip or knee replacement surgery.

If you have a raised BMI it is important to lose weight before and after any joint replacement surgery. This will reduce the risks described above and also increase the length of time your new joint will last.

If you require more information on weight loss please discuss this with your GP or practice nurse and they will be able to provide you with information about what services are available in your area.

## References:

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2. Vasarhelyi, EM., MacDonald, SJ. 2012. The influence of obesity on total joint arthroplasty. *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*. 94-B, (11), 100-102.
3. Kerkhoffs, GMMJ., Servien, E., Dunn, W., Dahm, D., Bramer, JAM., Haverkamp, D. 2012. The influence of obesity on the complication rate and outcome of total knee arthroplasty. A meta-analysis and systematic literature review. 94, 1839-1844.
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