

PHYSIOLOGY

# Our Weights Change

WOMEN ARE more slender than their mothers of a generation ago while men are becoming heavier than their fathers.

This is one of the significant findings of the largest statistical investigation undertaken in the health field, published by the Society of Actuaries under the title "1959 Build and Blood Pressure Study."

It has been found that the weights of women in their 20's average at least five pounds less than three or four decades ago. In fact, women of all ages now tip the scales several pounds lower. This is partly due to lighter clothing but reflects mainly the established vogue of slenderness that has outmoded Lillian Russell as the ideal figure.

In contrast, the average weights of short and medium men in their 20's and 30's are now about five pounds higher. The increase in men's weights at other ages and also for tall men has been generally smaller. Although the proportion of overweights has changed little over the years in both sexes, the proportion of men who are underweight has diminished, while the proportion of underweight women has increased appreciably.

The actuaries' study reveals that marked underweight is now a much less serious condition than in the past, but the excess mortality associated with overweight remains as high.

For instance, men with weights 20

pounds above average incur a penalty of about 10% higher mortality. Those weighing 25 pounds above average are subject to 25% excess mortality, while weights of 50 pounds above average are associated with an excess mortality of up to 50% or even 75%.

Women were found to be able to stand added weight better than men. The study also showed that weight reduction pays. Those who were overweight when insured, but were later given standard insurance because of sustained weight reduction, showed an immediate benefit of normal mortality, which continued for at least ten years.

The study also showed that even a small rise in blood pressure may signal potential danger. Here again, women were found better able to withstand high blood pressure than men.

Science News Letter, October 31, 1959

## Comparison of Average Weights in New Study With Current Standard (Graduated Weights in Pounds)

MEN							WOMEN						
AGES 15-16				AGES 17-19			AGES 15-16				AGES 17-19		
HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE
5' 0"	98	103.5	-5.5	113	110	3	4' 10"	97	97	0	99	105	-6
5' 2"	107	111	-4	119	116	3	5' 0"	103	104	-1	105	109	-4
5' 4"	117	119	-2	127	124	3	5' 2"	111	110	1	113	115	-2
5' 6"	127	127	0	135	132	3	5' 4"	117	117.5	-.5	120	121	-1
5' 8"	137	135.5	1.5	143	140	3	5' 6"	125	125.5	-.5	127	128	-1
5' 10"	146	143.5	2.5	151	148	3	5' 8"	132	133.5	-1.5	134	136	-2
6' 0"	154	153.5	.5	160	158	2	5' 10"	...	...	...	142	144	-2
6' 2"	164	163.5	.5	168	168	0	6' 0"	...	...	...	152	152	0
6' 4"	...	...	...	176	178	-2							
AGES 20-24				AGES 25-29			AGES 20-24				AGES 25-29		
HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE
5' 0"	122	118	4	128	124	4	4' 10"	102	111	-9	107	114	-7
5' 2"	128	124	4	134	128	6	5' 0"	108	115	-7	113	118	-5
5' 4"	136	131	5	141	134	7	5' 2"	115	120	-5	119	122	-3
5' 6"	142	139	3	148	142	6	5' 4"	121	126	-5	125	129	-4
5' 8"	149	146	3	155	150	5	5' 6"	129	133	-4	133	136	-3
5' 10"	157	154	3	163	158	5	5' 8"	136	141	-5	140	144	-4
6' 0"	166	163	3	172	169	3	5' 10"	144	149	-5	148	152	-4
6' 2"	174	173	1	182	181	1	6' 0"	154	156	-2	158	159	-1
6' 4"	181	183	-2	190	192	-2							
AGES 30-39				AGES 40-49			AGES 30-39				AGES 40-49		
HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE
5' 0"	131	128	3	134	133	1	4' 10"	115	119	-4	122	126	-4
5' 2"	137	132	5	140	137	3	5' 0"	120	123	-3	127	130	-3
5' 4"	145	138	7	148	143	5	5' 2"	126	127	-1	133	135	-2
5' 6"	153	146	7	156	151	5	5' 4"	132	134	-2	140	141	-1
5' 8"	161	155	6	165	160	5	5' 6"	139	142	-3	147	149	-2
5' 10"	170	165	5	174	170	4	5' 8"	146	150	-4	155	157	-2
6' 0"	179	176	3	183	182	1	5' 10"	154	157	-3	164	164	0
6' 2"	188	189	-1	192	195	-3	6' 0"	160	163	-3	174	171	3
6' 4"	199	201	-2	203	209	-6							
AGES 50-59				AGES 60-69			AGES 50-59				AGES 60-69		
HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	HEIGHT	NEW	OLD	CHANGE	NEW	OLD	CHANGE
5' 0"	136	135	1	133	136	-3	4' 10"	125	129	-4	127	130	-3
5' 2"	142	139	3	139	140	-1	5' 0"	130	133	-3	131	134	-3
5' 4"	149	145	4	146	146	0	5' 2"	136	138	-2	137	139	-2
5' 6"	157	153	4	154	154	0	5' 4"	144	144	0	145	145	0
5' 8"	166	163	3	163	164	-1	5' 6"	152	153	-1	153	154	-1
5' 10"	175	173	2	173	174	-1	5' 8"	160	163	-3	161	164	-3
6' 0"	185	184	1	183	185	-2	5' 10"	169	171	-2			
6' 2"	194	198	-4	193	199	-6	6' 0"	180	177	3			
6' 4"	205	212	-7	204	213	-9							

