- ***Understanding Weight & Body Composition***

Weight is often used as a measure of health in our culture. However, while a healthy weight is important, it looks different for everyone. Health issues can occur at very low weights or higher weights, thus a low weight is not necessarily more healthy. Focusing on creating healthy habits that incorporate nutritious foods and physical activity is the best way to improve your health.

Body Weight vs. Body Composition

- ***Body weight is made up of fat mass and non-fat mass***
- ***Fat mass is body fat under the skin, in muscle tissues and around internal organs (visceral)***
- ***Non-fat mass is blood, bones, muscle (smooth, cardia, skeletal), organs and tissues***
- ***Some fat is essential (hormone regulation, energy stores, protecting vital organs)***
- ***Women require higher levels of body fat (associated with fertility and reproductive hormones)***

The importance of muscle mass:

1. ***Muscle is more dense than adipose tissue (fat)***
2. ***It increases metabolism***
3. ***It helps protect bones***
4. ***It reduces risk of injury***

Functions of Body Fat:

- ***Aid in body temperature regulation and insulation***
- ***Protect and cushions vital organs/intestines and helps protect from injury***
- ***Skin protection, softening and flexibility***
- ***Hormone regulation***
- ***Stored energy reserve used during extended exercise and when there is restricted food intake***
- ***Necessary for the absorption of fat soluble vitamins (A,D,E,K)***

The Scale: Friend or Foe?

Diet culture teaches us that our value as humans is directly correlated to the number on the scale

Why the scale can be misleading:

- ***Our body weight fluctuates throughout the day due to hydration levels and wasted excretion***
- ***Increases in muscle mass can cause weight to be maintained or increased (but body size is reduced)***

Weight does not translate directly to health:

- ***There are health risks associated with lower weights, higher weights and average weights***
- ***Risks are more closely linked to ongoing behaviors that impact health***

The verdict:

- ***Stepping on the scale regularly is not the best way to determine if your health is improving***
- ***Weighing yourself daily and not seeing drastic 'improvements' can actually harm your healthy habit process and set the stage for overeating and further weight gain***