



Body-for-LIFE for Women **The Truth About Body Composition**

In *Body-for-LIFE for Women: A Woman’s Plan for Physical and Mental Transformation* (Rodale, 2005), Pamela Peeke, M.D. M.P.H., F.A.C.P., one the nation’s leading experts in women’s health and fitness, delivers the groundbreaking message that scale weight is out and body composition is in. “Scale weight is just one piece of data, not the entire story. Instead, women should arm themselves with a body comp analyzer, a tape measure and a Clothes-o-Meter to monitor their progress,” she says. According to Peeke:

- Scale weight fools women into thinking they are fit and healthy.
- Achieving an optimal body composition (body comp) is the key to becoming mentally and physically fit.
- Only through a *mental and physical transformation* can a woman *achieve and sustain* her optimal body comp for life.
- Women need a gender specific program that incorporates tools that honor their unique psychological and biological hard wiring, so that any woman at any age can achieve her transformation.

In her book, Dr. Peeke explains that several women of the same age, height and weight can have completely different body compositions and fitness levels. The following chart presents four women who are all 35-years-old, 5’4” and 140 pounds. While they are all the same scale weight, see how their other measurements vary.

	% body fat	Pounds of body fat	Pounds of muscle	Dress Size	Measured Metabolism
Mary	16	22.4	117.6	8	Very High
Joan	32	44.8	95.2	12	Low
Ann	35	49	91	14	Low
Tanya	22	30.8	109.2	10	High

Here’s the *real* story:

Mary is a champion swimmer, who also weight lifts, and has better than average muscle and less than average fat. She’s mentally happy and satisfied with her life. Waist= 27.5 inches.

Joan does aerobic exercise in spurts, no weight training, and skips meals. Her restricted eating has wasted away her muscle mass—she has too much body fat and a low metabolism since muscle drives metabolism. She dreams of being a size 8 or 10 and is constantly stressed about it. Waist= 35 inches.

Ann shed 50 pounds by “dieting” and scale weight monitoring alone. She occasionally exercised and didn’t do any weight training. Her body fat is up, muscle down, metabolism down and she’s frustrated that other women who weigh what she weighs are in smaller dress sizes. Waist= 35.5 inches.

Tanya stays active on a daily basis and weight trains twice per week. After battling with yoyo dieting for years, she shed her 30 pounds of excess body fat and has kept it off for 5 years. She’s content with her life and practices stress resilience. Waist= 30 inches.