



## Body Measurement Tools Come Of Age

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Underwater weighing and skin caliper testing have long been the gold standards in determining an individual's ratio of lean muscle mass to body fat. As club owners, you already know that these methods are quite accurate when administered by a qualified professional. You also know that they can strain resources, cost a lot of money and be time consuming.

Bioelectrical impedance measurement has become increasingly more popular and widely used in the form of weight scales. Many early studies revealed that this type of screening could be skewed by a variety of variables such as hydration and menstruation cycles. Weight scales that use body fat analysis use formulas that predict your body fat. Unfortunately, one formula doesn't exist that accurately predicts body fat for the whole population. Whether or not body fat scales measure your true body fat percentage is not always the most important element of this test, except for competitive athletes in some cases. Weight and body fat scales make this type of testing motivational and more acceptable to a wider variety of members.

Two things have happened in the evolution of this type of measurement. The first is that technology has advanced creating better devices that allow for more accuracy, and many of the products marketed to clubs provide additional feedback not available with traditional testing means. Quality scales also can act as an additional revenue center that measure many individuals quickly.

Although this column does not aim to provide specific recommendations, keep in mind that in the case of scale-based monitors, you often get what you pay for. Health club scales will get heavy use, and it's important to research your options, get input from your fitness staff and select a scale designed for commercial applications. Some of the models that are worth considering include:

### The Tanita BC-418 Segmental Body Composition Analyzer Scale

Tanita has improved its products over the past few years based on extensive field testing and feedback from physiologists and users. The 418 unit provides segmental reading that separates fat percentage, fat mass, fat-free mass and predicted muscle mass using measurements taken from the arms, legs and trunk. This unit also calculates the amount of fat mass to be lost in order to achieve a selected target. The goal-setting function focuses on actual fat mass rather than weight, an important distinction in reaching achievable goals. This unit also provides body mass index (BMI) and basal metabolic rate for each test and features hand grips as well as foot pads.

### The BioMeasure Device by Glenview Health Systems

This free-standing unit measures height and provides an instant calculation of BMI in addition to body fat and weight. It is designed for club use and provides on-screen and audio prompts to new users or fitness professionals. The BioMeasure also provides a printed readout of all of the measurements including time of day, weight, recommended weight, and fat-index percent and fat mass in pounds. From an aesthetic perspective, the BioMeasure is also one of the cleanest and most modern weight and body fat scales on the market.

### The Omron Health Care Body Logic

Long a leader in blood pressure monitoring devices and other health care products, Omron has a portable version of a body fat measuring device. This model uses bioelectrical impedance, in which the user holds hand grips instead of standing on the machine. The device is highly portable and can be moved around your club and used in a variety of settings. The entire unit weighs 8 ounces.

### The Futurex 6100

This product is highly portable, cost competitive and provides all of the essentials of a quality product. The unit can store data for up to 600 test subjects at a time and features coupon software that allows clubs to print promotional coupons with body composition results for current and potential users.

Fitness professionals often have strong opinions as to the accuracy of different testing methods, and many believe that body fat scales using bioelectrical impedance are less accurate. Most clients are looking for a measurement tool that is easy and simple to use, provides instant feedback and helps show progress over time, which is the most important element in exercise adherence. In many cases, body composition monitoring can be bundled with other services to add value and increase fees of particular suites of services like personal training and nutritional services.

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