

WHAT THE SCALE CANNOT TELL YOU

Body weight is easy to measure, but it provides limited insight into the adaptations many facilities are trying to support. Relying on scale weight alone can obscure meaningful changes in muscle mass, strength, physical function, and performance.

Questions the Scale Cannot Answer

- Has this individual gained or lost muscle mass?
- Is this individual becoming stronger?
- Is physical function improving?
- Is training producing meaningful adaptations?
- Is the individual becoming more capable, resilient, or independent?
- Are health-related outcomes improving despite little change in body weight?

Assessment Options Beyond the Scale

Outcome	In-facility Assessment Options	Why It Matters
Body Composition	BIA	Distinguishes changes in lean mass and fat mass
Strength	Grip strength, machine-based or isometric tests, 1-8 repetition maximum (RM) testing	Reflects force-producing capacity and physical capability
Power	Vertical jump, medicine ball throw, sprint performance, velocity-based training metrics	Measures the ability to generate force rapidly
Cardiorespiratory Fitness	Submaximal fitness testing, power output testing, time trials, VO ₂ assessments	Reflects aerobic capacity and work tolerance
Physical Function	Sit-to-stand, loaded carry, stair-climb, gait speed assessments	Assesses movement capacity and real-world function
Longitudinal Progress	Repeat assessments over time	Demonstrates meaningful adaptation beyond weight change

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Match the Assessment to the Individual

Population	Assessment Priorities
Older Adults	BIA, grip strength, sit-to-stand, gait speed, loaded carry
General Fitness Participants	BIA, machine-based strength testing, grip strength, cardiorespiratory fitness assessments
Strength-Focused Exercisers	BIA, 1RM testing, 3-5RM testing, isometric strength testing, velocity-based training metrics
Athletes	BIA, maximal strength, power, speed, cardiorespiratory fitness, and sport-specific performance testing

Key Takeaway

The most valuable assessment is not necessarily the most sophisticated. It is the assessment that aligns with the goals, needs, and capabilities of the individual being evaluated.