



Santa might be fat, but he's still fit

It's a busy time of year for Santa Claus, but he was kind enough to put a few minutes aside for a "Health Options" interview about his health. He was his usual jolly self and gave us the straight scoop.

Health Options: Mr. Claus, there's been a lot of media attention given to the "obesity epidemic." Do you see yourself as part of it?

Santa Claus: Ho, ho, NO. Of course, I'm a big guy. My doctor tells me I have a BMI (body mass index) of 35, which puts me into the obesity category. This BMI thing is a single number calculated from your weight and height. Since my BMI is over 30, I'm classified as obese. But the BMI does not distinguish between body weight in muscle and body weight in fat.

I started checking and found that Barry Bonds, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone are all obese according to their BMI values. So, I figure I'm in good company.

All this talk about obesity is focused on the wrong thing. We don't have an obesity epidemic,

we have a couch potato epidemic!

HO: So, do you consider yourself to be healthy?

SC: Well, I've outlived a number of my doctors! But, seriously, you can't do what I do without being in good physical condition. I walk at least five miles a day to get around my toy warehouse at the North Pole. I also lift heavy boxes repeatedly. The elves are too little, you know. So I'm a lot more fit than many people think.

Also, my blood values for cholesterol, triglycerides, etc., all indicate that I have little or no risk of cardiovascular disease. I rarely smoke my pipe anymore, so that's not a risk factor, either.

I might be a bit fat, but I'm also fit. I'm a man of substance and proud of it.

HO: You might be the most popular obese person in the world.

SC: Stop calling me obese! I've had my body fat estimated, and it's about 25 percent. That might be a bit high for a man, but at the North Pole it helps

keep me warm. Some sedentary people who look thin have the same percent body fat as I do. Since they are in a poor state of fitness, their risk of developing chronic diseases is greater than mine.

HO: How do you tell who's been naughty or nice?

SC: When I'm out of uniform, I notice that some people treat me very differently. They act like I must not take care of myself, or they make comments that indicate I must lack will-power. Usually, young children don't treat me that way, but as they get older, they might learn the behavior from adults. How people treat me tells me plenty about the naughty-or-nice bit.

HO: It sounds like we can count on you staying in good health.

SC: You bet. Mrs. Claus feeds me a great variety of healthful foods, and I sleep like a log after my long workdays. So, don't worry. As long as there is Christmas, I will be around.

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