

# TAKING THE SKINFOLD MEASUREMENTS

The accuracy of measurement is, as one would expect, dependant upon the accuracy of the equipment used, the correct selection and location of the Skinfold sites, the proper technique in taking the measurements, and the experience of the user.

## 3.1 EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

**A TAPE MEASURE** - To assist in locating the correct site.

**SKINFOLD CALIPER** - Accurately calibrated and with a constant spring pressure of 10g/mm<sup>2</sup> throughout its entire range. Your Harpenden Caliper has been calibrated to this performance prior to dispatch from the factory.

## 3.2 CORRECT TECHNIQUE

Essential for accurate and repeatable tests, specific guidelines for taking skinfold measurement have been established.

Following a standard method of assessment helps ensure accuracy and repeatability on future testing.

- a) Measurement should be taken on healthy undamaged, uninfected dry skin. Moist skin is harder to grasp and can influence the measurement.

**Do not use the Caliper on broken or infected skin.**

- b) Instruct the test subject to keep the muscles relaxed during the test.
- c) Take all measurements on the right side of the body. An exception might be where a deformity or missing limb would necessitate using the left side.
- d) Mark the Skinfold site (see pages 5 to 7) using a pen with water-soluble ink. Use a tape measure to accurately find the midpoints.
- e) The skinfold should be firmly grasped by the thumb and index finger, using the pads at the tip of the thumb and finger. Gently pull the skinfold away from the body.
- f) The Caliper should be placed perpendicular to the fold, on the site marked, dial up, at approximately 1 cm below the finger and thumb. While maintaining the grasp of the skinfold, allow the Caliper to be released so that full tension is placed on the Skinfold. The dial should be read to the nearest 0.50 mm, 1 to 2 seconds after the grip has been fully released.
- g) The Caliper should not be placed too close to the body or too far away on the tip of the Skinfold. Try to visualise the location of a true double fold of skin thickness, and place the Caliper there.
- h) A minimum of two measurements should be taken at each site. If repeated tests vary by more than 1 mm, repeat the measurement. If consecutive measurements become increasingly smaller, the fat is being compressed. Go to another site and come back a little later and recheck the problem site.
- i) The final value recorded should be the average of the two that seems best to represent the Skinfold fat site.
- j) Record each Skinfold as you measure it. It is easy to forget the first measurement if you try to keep it all in your head.
- k) Experience is necessary to grasp the same size Skinfold in the same location consistently. Practice these techniques until you get consistent results.