

How To Calculate and Interpret Your Child's BMI (Body Mass Index)*

When to use BMI. You can calculate your own or your child's BMI at any time after age 2 years. Without dwelling on it, you might want to check it annually to see the pattern of growth of BMI.

How to calculate it. There is a very easy way to get the BMI number. On the internet, go to: <http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi>. This will open a page that gives you a choice between an adult BMI calculator and a child/teen BMI calculator. This page also has links on it to tell you more about BMI. Follow the directions and enter the birth date, date of measurement, the height and weight and gender (boy or girl), then click "calculate" and the site will display the number along with the BMI percentile. If you wish you can enter the number on the BMI charts provided in this book.

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How to interpret the BMI

A trend — several annual or semi-annual determinations — is better than a single measurement, but if you have old records of heights and weights at different ages you can get a sense of the path of your child’s BMI. Many expert groups have defined the following categories:

Under Weight	Less than 5th percentile
Normal Weight	Between 5th and 85th percentile
Over Weight	Between 85th and 95th percentile
Obese	95th percentile and over

It is possible for very muscular teenagers to have a high BMI because they have large muscle mass, but for the most part a high BMI indicates increased body fat.

The above categories are arbitrary. You need to know that the risk of becoming overweight later in life increases the higher your BMI is over the 50th percentile.

What to do if your child’s BMI approaches the “overweight” and “obese” categories. The first thing to do is to be a nutrition and activity detective:

- What is the intake of fresh fruits and vegetables?
- How much outdoor play is there?
- Are there safe places to bike, skip rope, and be active at least an hour a day?

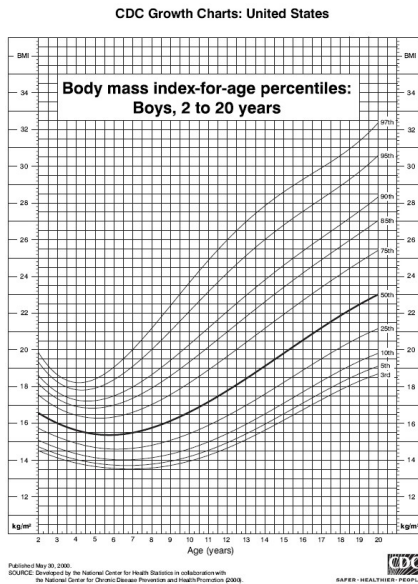
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- How much time is spent in sedentary activities such as computer games and TV?
- How often and what quality is PE in the school?

Tend to the basic opportunities, make sure they are in place, then follow along for a 6–12 months to see the progress of “growing into” the weight. Your doctor can help with this process. Remember 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

- 5 fruits and vegetable servings a day
- 4 glasses of water a day
- 3 servings of low-fat meat or dairy
- 2 hours of TV or screen time per day
- 1 hour or more of active play per day

(Courtesy of the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children — CLOCC)



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