



What is BMI?

Growth Screenings:

Pennsylvania school law requires that each school age child receive an annual growth screening, which is a measurement of height and weight. Growth screening procedures from the Pennsylvania Department of Health also require that the Body Mass Index (BMI) and Body Mass Index Percentage (BMI %) be calculated for each child and that parents/guardians receive the results. Students in the Hampton Township School District are generally weighed and measured sometime during the fall. Parents receive written notification of the results of the growth screening after the first of the year.

What is BMI?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a screening tool used to determine whether a person is overweight or underweight. BMI-for-Age is the recommended method for screening children and adolescents. This weight-for-stature index is used to determine whether a child is within a normal growth pattern, overweight, underweight, or at risk for being overweight or underweight. BMI-for-Age is calculated using weight and stature (height) measurements, which compare the child's weight relative to stature with other children of the same age and gender.

BMI should be considered a screening tool only and not a definitive measure of overweight or obesity as the indicator does have limitations. For example, athletes, dancers, and other physically active students may have a high BMI due to increased muscle mass, which weighs more than fat mass.

In Pennsylvania, 18% of children aged ten to twelve years were found to be overweight in a 2001 study conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Being overweight can put a person at risk for certain health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and cancer. Being underweight may increase the risk for heart problems, loss of bone mass, and anemia.

What can parents do?

Parents are urged to share growth screening information with the child's healthcare provider. Parents can also call the school nurse to discuss the screening results and growth patterns.



For more information on Body Mass Index for children and teens, go to the CDC's website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-for-age.htm>.

Other growth and childhood nutrition related websites are listed below:

National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day Program - <http://www.5aday.gov>

Dole 5 A Day for Kids Program - <http://www.dole5aday.com>

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports - <http://www.fitness.gov>

Pick A Better Snack and Act - <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food>

Eat Smart, Play Hard - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard>

Project PA - <http://nutrition.psu.edu/projectpa>

American Obesity Association - <http://www.obesity.org>

Pennsylvania Department of Health - www.health.state.pa.us/schoolhealth