

BMI's (Body Mass Index) – What is this?

Since childhood weight issues have become an increasing concern, school health offices are becoming more involved in identifying children at risk. As part of my routine health screening (heights, weights, vision, and hearing,) **I will also be calculating each student's body mass index (BMI.)** This is calculated using your child's weight and height and then used to find the corresponding BMI-for-age and sex. BMI-for-age percentiles show your child's weight compared to that of other children of the same age and sex.

Regardless of the current BMI-for-age category, help your child or teen develop healthy weight habits and keep track of BMI-for-age. A single BMI-for-age calculation is not enough to evaluate long-term weight status because height and weight change with growth. Maintaining a healthy weight throughout childhood and adolescence may reduce the risk of becoming overweight or obese as an adult.

Tip to Promote Healthy Eating & Physical Activity in Teens and Children.

Children and teens need to eat nutritious foods and participate in regular physical activity to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Nutritious food and regular physical activity also help ensure healthy growth and development in children and teens.

To help your child maintain a healthy weight, balance the calories your child consumes from foods and beverages with the calories your child uses through physical activity and normal growth. Children should participate in physical activity on most (preferably all) days of the week. Parents should also limit television viewing and computer use.

The goal for overweight children and teens is to reduce the rate of weight gain while allowing normal growth and development. **Children and teens should NOT be placed on a weight reduction diet without the consultation of a healthcare provider.**

Support healthy eating habits.

Encourage your child to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages every day. To help your child eat healthfully:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk and dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Serve reasonably-sized portions.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.