



Body Mass Index (BMI)

(06/08)

What is a BMI?

BMI, or Body Mass Index, is a measure that is calculated from a child's weight and height.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (kilograms)}}{\text{height}^2 \text{ (meter}^2\text{)}}$$

BMI is made up of the weight of the entire body, which includes muscle, fat and bone. Although BMI is not a direct measure of body fatness, for most children and teens, larger BMI scores typically are related to greater amounts of body fat.

How do I make sense of my child's BMI score?

The amount of body fat is different for boys and girls and changes with age. To understand the meaning of your child's BMI, you must look at the BMI range for the age and sex of your child. The numbers in this table give the 5th and 95th percentiles for US girls.

Age (years)	Body Mass Index (BMI) Percentiles for US Girls	
	5 th Percentile	95 th Percentile
6	13.4	18.8
7	13.4	19.7
8	13.5	20.7
9	13.7	21.8
10	14.0	23.0
11	14.4	24.1

What should I do with this information?

Your child's BMI cannot be used to diagnose "overweight" or "underweight." BMI can be used to alert you that there might be a problem.

- If your child's BMI is below the 5th percentile for her age and sex, your child may be considered underweight.
- If your child's BMI is above the 95th percentile for her age and sex, your child may be considered overweight.

Consult with your health care provider to determine if there is a problem that should be watched or addressed.

Where can I get more information about BMI?

Visit the BMI information website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/.