

Is My Child GROWING Well?

Questions and Answers for Parents



Children come in different sizes and shapes.

Though your child may be taller or shorter, heavier or lighter than other children the same age, changes in height and weight generally follow a regular pattern that is right for your child.

Babies grow at different rates. For example, breastfed babies tend to grow more quickly than non-breastfed babies in the first six months and tend to grow more slowly in the second six months of life. Non-breastfed babies tend to grow faster in the second six months of life.



Why should I keep track of my child's growth?

The way your child grows says a lot about her health. Growing too fast or too slowly can be a sign of possible problems with health or nutrition.

Starting from birth, your child's weight and length/height should be measured on a regular basis to see how he is growing over time. Babies and toddlers should also have the size of their head measured (head circumference).

How often should my child be weighed and measured?

Your child should be weighed and measured at all regularly scheduled well-child visits and/or at visits when your child is ill. Typical well-child visits may occur:

- within one to two weeks of birth
- at two, four, six, nine, 12, 18 and 24 months
- once per year for children over two years and for adolescents

How is my child's growth tracked?

A growth chart is a type of graph used to track your child's growth pattern. Each time your child is measured, the new weight and length/height measurements are marked on the growth chart.

The chart helps show if your child is growing in a healthy way. Your child's growth chart will be kept as part of her health record until she becomes an adult. You can ask to see this growth chart at each visit.

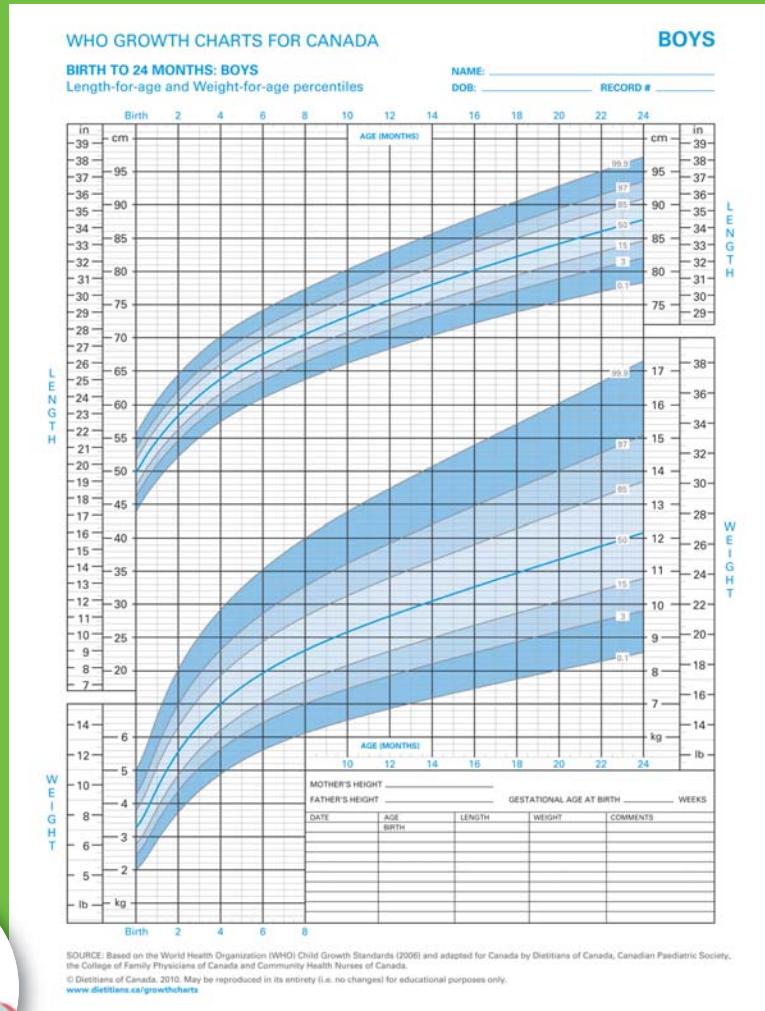


Which growth chart should be used to track my child's growth?

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) released new child growth standards.

The WHO growth charts are the best tool for tracking a child's growth. They should replace other growth charts that have been used for healthy term infants, children and teens. The WHO growth charts are being used to track children's growth in a number of countries all over the world.

Here is an example of how the growth charts look.



Adapted with permission from the World Health Organization.

How do I know if my child is growing well?

Many things affect a child's growth including their eating and physical activity habits, environment and parent's height. If your child is growing well, his head circumference, weight and length/height will follow (or "track") along the same growth lines over time.

Remember all children have a pattern of growth that is natural for them. Regular weight and length/height measurements over time will show your child's special growth pattern.

Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns about your child's growth.

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