

Growth Charts

Information for parents/carers

Your child's growth is an important indicator of his or her health. The UK-WHO growth charts allow health professionals to plot and measure your child's growth from birth. Read about these below, and download our factsheets for more detail.

You can find digital copies of all growth charts from the [dedicated PCO UK page](#).

What can the charts tell us?

By plotting a child's growth on the chart, we can see whether she or he is following the expected pattern.

These useful fact sheets provide information on [what growth charts are and why we need them](#), and [understanding growth charts](#).

Who are the charts for?

The charts are based on breastfed babies. However, they should be used for all babies, however they are fed.

They are suitable for babies and children from all ethnic backgrounds. There are separate charts for boys and girls.

There is also a separate page on the charts for babies born early, or preterm (before 37 weeks).

By plotting a child's growth on the chart, we can see whether she or he is following the expected pattern.

What are the lines on the chart?

These are called centile lines. They are based on measurements taken from many children. The centile lines show how one child compares with other children of the same age and sex.

Weights and heights that are anywhere within the centile lines are considered normal.

There are no centile lines between birth and two weeks. This is because babies have very individual weight patterns at this age. Babies should be weighed during this time, and if there is a weight loss of 10% or more the baby should be examined and their feeding reviewed.

Why do we use growth charts?

Poor growth in infancy is associated with high childhood morbidity and mortality. This means that a child's growth is an important indicator of health and wellbeing.

Growth charts allow health professionals to plot and measure child growth, allowing for comparisons with healthy children of the same gender and age. They are also used to predict how big or heavy healthy children are expected to be at any age.

Background

The growth charts are based on the WHO Child Growth Standards, which describe the optimal growth for healthy, breastfed children.

They include clear instructions on how to measure, plot and interpret the chart. The features include an adult height predictor, a Body Mass Index (BMI) converter and guidance on gestational age correction.

They should be used for all new births and referrals (since 2009 in England and January 2010 in Scotland).

How do I find out more?

There is information in the Parent Child Health Record ('red book') to help you understand what your child's chart will look like and how to understand it.

If you would like more information, please contact us at growth.charts@rcpch.ac.uk.