

Family Education Sheet

Body Mass Index (BMI)



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Until every child is well™

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What is BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight.

If your child's BMI is high, we worry about them having an unhealthy weight. An unhealthy weight is connected to heart disease, blood sugar problems like diabetes, and poor health.

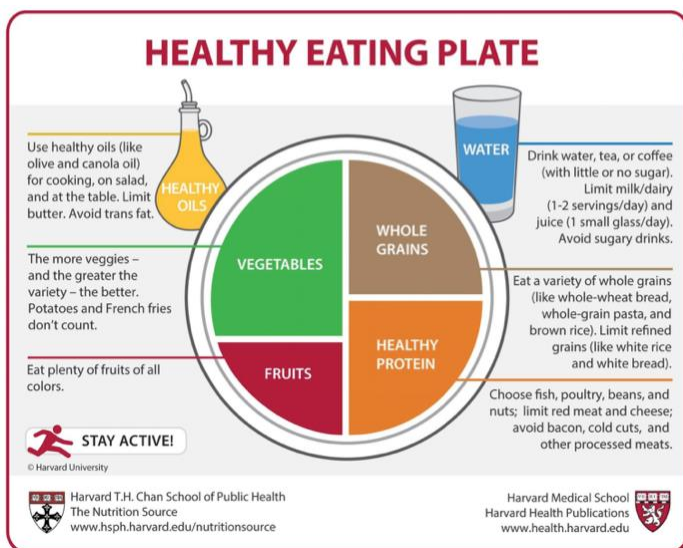
Your child's BMI _____

Your child's BMI percentile _____

A healthy BMI for children is under the 85th percentile.

How can I improve my child's BMI with diet?

- **Upgrade your plate:** Make ½ the plate fruits and/or veggies, ¼ lean protein and ¼ whole grains (see Healthy Eating Plate).



- **Upgrade your veggies:** Choose non-starchy veggies (potatoes, peas and corn are starchy vegetables).
- **Upgrade your drinks:** Choose low- or no-calories beverages and skip drinks with 4 grams or more of sugar per serving, including fruit juice, soda and sports drinks.
- **Upgrade your breakfast:** Serve a balanced breakfast every morning—need a list of ideas? Just ask!
- **Upgrade your snacks:** Choose high-protein, low-fat snacks like fruit, vegetables, nuts and hummus.

Need help with your child's diet?

Schedule a nutrition appointment

- Ask your primary care provider for the name of a registered dietitian.
- Schedule a visit here in the Boston Children's Cardiology Department by calling 617-355-4256 — ask for a "nutrition only" appointment (available in Boston or Waltham) to see a cardiology dietitian.
- Schedule a visit with Boston Children's Nutrition Center by calling 617-355-4677 to see a general pediatric dietitian.

Online resources

For more healthy eating recommendations, visit:

- Alliance for a Healthier Generation: healthiergeneration.org
- American Heart Association: healthyforgood.heart.org
- Harvard Plate: hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource
- Preventive Cardiology Heart Healthy Recipes: pinterest.com/bostonchildrens/preventive-cardiologys-heart-healthy-recipes

How can I improve my child's BMI with exercise?

- Aim for 5 hours of exercise a week. Start with 20 minutes a day.
 - Swimming, walking, dancing, running, biking, basketball, in-line skating, jogging and skateboarding are all good sources of exercise.
- Use iPhone apps to help track activity. We recommend [Sworkit](#) and [GoNoodle](#).
- Find a workout partner! Working out with a family member or friend is a great way to make exercising fun.
- Limit your child's screen time (TV, computer, etc.) to 2 hours or less a day.

Need help with your child's exercise?

Programs/resources

- Boston Children's Cardiac Fitness Program: Speak with a member of your child's cardiology team to learn more.
- Build Our Kids' Success (only at participating schools): bokskids.org
- Fitness in the City: Ask your child's primary care provider (PCP) about this.
- OWL (Optimal Weight for Life) Program: childrenshospital.org/centers-and-services/optimal-weight-for-life-program
- YMCA fitness programs: ymcaboston.org

This Family Education Sheet is available in Spanish.