Youth Body Mass Index (BMI)

In Idaho, 13.3% of youth ages 10 to 17 are overweight, giving Idaho a ranking of 39 among the 50 states and D.C.

Body mass index (BMI) is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters. It is an easy way to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems. For children and teens, BMI is age- and sex-specific and is often referred to as BMI-for-age.

Regardless of the current BMI-for-age category, help your child or teen develop healthy weight habits and talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider as part of ongoing tracking of BMI-for-age. If your child has significant weight loss or gain, he or she should be referred to and guided by a doctor or other healthcare provider.

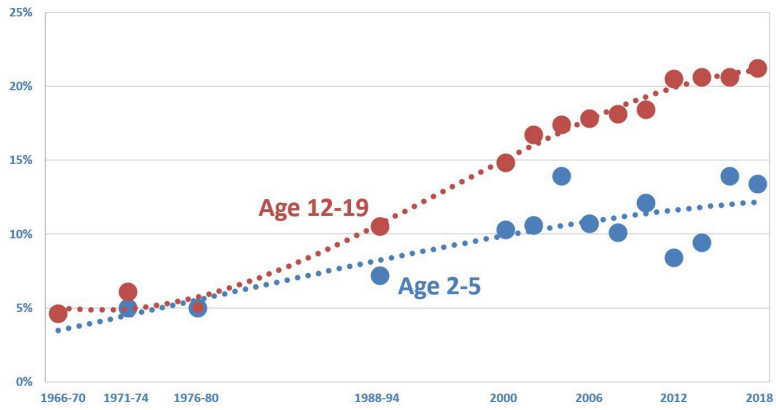
Tracking growth patterns over time can help you make sure your child is achieving or maintaining a healthy weight. A single BMI-for-age calculation is not enough to evaluate long-term weight status because your child's height and weight will change as they grow. With individuals, health care providers should consider BMI along with other factors such as family history, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and eating patterns and physical activity level.

Roughly one in six youth are overweight, according to the newest available data. The data, from the National Survey of Children's Health, show that in 2019-2020, 16.2% of youth ages 10-17 were obese. That rate has held steady for the last five years.

Scan here for a youth BMI calculator

Prevalence of Obesity

U.S. Toddlers and Teens



Trends in obesity among children and adolescents aged 2-19 years, by age: United States, 1966-2018

96%

Of elementary schools offer no physical education classes

7 HR

Is the amount of time kids spend in front of the TV or computer screen each day.

4.8

Million children are affected by obesity nationwide





Understanding your child's BMI category

Weight Status Category	Percentile Range
Underweight	Less than the 5th percentile
Healthy Weight	5th percentile to less than the 85th percentile
Overweight	85th to less than the 95th percentile
Obesity	Equal to or greater than the 95th percentile

BMI-for-age weight status categories and the corresponding percentiles

Good Nutrition and Exercicse Options

- Eat foods from each food group each day.
- Use measuring cups to learn what 1 cup and ½ cup look like.
- Cut raw vegetables like broccoli and carrots into small sizes. Keep them in clear containers in the refrigerator for quick snacks.
- Broil, grill, roast, or microwave meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying.
- Visit a local farmers market to buy fruits and vegetables in season. Pick low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt (Recommended for persons over 2 years of age).
- Choose whole-grain foods, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice, and low-fat popcorn more often.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label to find healthier foods at the grocery store
- Play active games like tag or jump rope with children.
- Walk with the kids to school each day.
- Take the stairs, not the elevator.
- Be physically active for at least 2½ hours per week.
- Help kids be physically active at least 60 minutes every day, or most days. They can walk, dance, bike, play ball—it all counts!

