Heights and Weights Check for Children

Every year, throughout the country, children in Reception (aged 4 - 5 years) and Year 6 (aged 10 -11 years) have their height and weight measured at school. This is called the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). It’s part of a national campaign to help children maintain a healthy weight.

From 2016, parents in Somerset will be sent letters informing them which weight category their child falls into. This information will be sent out within 6 weeks of children being measured and will also be sent to the family’s G.P.
“Why do you measure children? Isn’t it obvious which children are underweight or overweight?”

Children’s weight is measured using the body mass index (BMI). BMI is calculated by dividing their weight (expressed in kilograms) by the square of their height (expressed in metres). We also factor in their age and sex. Each child’s weight category is then identified as underweight, healthy weight, overweight or very overweight.

“Why should my child take part?”

In Somerset we want to provide families with as much support and information as possible so that they feel happy for their children to take part in the measurement programme.

To help with this, we have provided parents with answers to some frequently asked questions.

By participating in the measurement programme, we are able to monitor the growth and health of children and then offer support and guidance where it is needed.

“It can be difficult for parents to tell, just by looking, that their child is overweight because both their height and weight are changing as they grow. Also, because more children are becoming heavier at a younger age, we’ve become used to seeing bigger children.”

“How will you work out my child’s weight?”

It can be difficult for parents to tell, just by looking, that their child is overweight because both their height and weight are changing as they grow. Also, because more children are becoming heavier at a younger age, we’ve become used to seeing bigger children.
The measurement programme is not compulsory. Parents will receive a letter giving them the opportunity to opt their child out of the measuring programme. However, if your child is overweight, we can offer you some solutions to help them lose the excess weight.

“Why does weight matter?”

BMI measures total body weight which includes muscle, fat, bone and the water in our bodies. Children that have a lot of muscle may have a high BMI but low levels of fat. This doesn’t mean they are unhealthy it just means they have a high BMI.

“I’ve had a letter saying my child is overweight - What should I do?”

“I know my child is overweight and I don’t want them to feel embarrassed by getting weighed at school. Can I opt them out of the programme?”

It can be upsetting to read that your child is overweight but the letter is sent to you to make sure that you are aware of your child’s weight, and to give you an opportunity, as a family, to work together and, maybe, make some lifestyle changes. Your GP will know that your child has been weighed and will have access to your child’s results and be able to give you support and advice.

“What if my child has a lot of muscle?”

“Why does weight matter?”

Weight can be a factor in a variety of illnesses in childhood and later life but physical health is not the only issue. Children that are underweight or overweight can also be affected by:

- Bullying.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Not wanting to take part in physical activity or sport.

“What other help and support is available?”

There are a variety of different ways to help your child achieve a healthy weight:

- You can go online for practical advice about increasing physical activity and healthy eating at www.nhs.uk/change4life and www.nhs.uk/ncmp3
- You will also be given contact details for your local school nurse who will be able to offer advice and support
- You may also like to explore www.zingsomerset.co.uk where you will find out about local activity clubs and get further support for the whole family.
Zing Somerset is launching a new lifestyle course to give families time and space to think about:

- Eating well
- Looking at what’s in a food label
- Getting more active
- Healthy recipes
- Managing stress

As well as a chance to try out different activities and games each week.

For more information contact lifestyle.hub@sompar.nhs.uk

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Sometimes it’s hard to know what to cook or have new meal ideas. And remembering ingredients and keeping track of calories can be a hassle. Don’t worry – the meal mixer takes care of it!

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