

# Use of World Health Organization and CDC Growth Charts for Children Aged 0--59 Months in the United States

**Please note:** An erratum has been published for this article. To view the erratum, please click [here](#).

## *Recommendations and Reports*

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Prepared by  
Laurence M. Grummer-Strawn, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Chris Reinold, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Nancy F. Krebs, MD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*  
<sup>2</sup>*Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado Denver*

**Corresponding preparer:** Laurence M. Grummer-Strawn, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, MS K-25, Atlanta, GA 30341. Telephone: 770-488-5702; Fax: 770-488-5369; E-mail: [lxg8@cdc.gov](mailto:lxg8@cdc.gov). The material in this report originated in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Ursula Bauer, PhD, Director.

## **Summary**

*In April 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) released new international growth charts for children aged 0--59 months. Similar to the 2000 CDC growth charts, these charts describe weight for age, length (or stature) for age, weight for length (or stature), and body mass index for age. Whereas the WHO charts are growth standards, describing the growth of healthy children in optimal conditions, the CDC charts are a growth reference, describing how certain children grew in a particular place and time. However, in practice, clinicians use growth charts as standards rather than references.*

*In 2006, CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics convened an expert panel to review scientific evidence and discuss the potential use of the new WHO growth charts in clinical settings in the United States. On the basis of input from this expert panel, CDC recommends that clinicians in the United States use the 2006 WHO international growth charts, rather than the CDC growth charts, for children aged <24 months (available at <https://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts>). The CDC growth charts should continue to be used for the assessment of growth in persons aged 2--19 years.*

*The recommendation to use the 2006 WHO international growth charts for children aged <24 months is based on several considerations, including the recognition that breastfeeding is the recommended standard for infant feeding.*

*In the WHO charts, the healthy breastfed infant is intended to be the standard against which all other infants are compared; 100% of the reference population of infants were breastfed for 12 months and were predominantly breastfed for at least 4 months. When using the WHO growth charts to screen for possible abnormal or unhealthy growth, use of the 2.3rd and 97.7th percentiles (or  $\pm 2$  standard deviations) are recommended, rather than the 5th and 95th percentiles. Clinicians should be aware that fewer U.S. children will be identified as underweight using the WHO charts, slower growth among breastfed infants during ages 3--18 months is normal, and gaining weight more rapidly than is indicated on the WHO charts might signal early signs of overweight.*