

BMI INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Physical Education Department at Seneca began a series of homework projects to promote the importance of daily exercise and good nutrition. The assignment for the month of January will be testing for a BMI percentile. The BMI screening is done in the privacy of the student's home, with the information remaining private. Examination of a BMI score often suggests a person should develop, modify, or continue an exercise/nutrition program. The BMI calculator places children within one of its four categories: Underweight, Healthy Weight, Overweight or Obese. Please be advised that this screening is not a diagnostic tool. However, it may serve as an alert that a child may need a further health evaluation.

What is BMI?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fitness for most people and is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems.

What is BMI percentile?

After BMI is calculated for children and teens, the BMI number is plotted on the BMI-for-age growth charts (for either girls or boys) to obtain a percentile ranking. The percentile indicates the relative position of the child's BMI number among children of the same sex and age. The growth charts show the weight status categories used with children and teens (underweight, healthy weight, overweight, and obese).

How is BMI used with children and teens?

BMI is used as a screening tool to identify possible weight problems for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the use of BMI to screen for overweight and obesity in children beginning at 2 years old.

How can I tell if my child is overweight or obese?

The AAP recommends the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) to screen for overweight and obesity in children and teens aged 2 through 19 years. Although BMI is used to screen for overweight and obesity in children and teens, BMI is not a diagnostic tool.

For children, BMI is used to screen for obesity, overweight, healthy weight or underweight. To determine if excess fat is a problem, a health care provider would need to perform further assessments. These assessments might include skin fold thickness measurements, evaluations of diet and physical activity, family history, and other appropriate health screenings.

The Health Effects of Overweight and Obesity

Research has shown that as weight increases to reach the levels referred to as "overweight" (BMI of 25 or higher) and "obesity" (BMI of 30 or higher), the risks for the following conditions also increase: heart disease caused by high cholesterol and/or high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, asthma, sleep apnea, and social discrimination.