

# What Parents Should Know About Body Mass Index

# What is Body Mass Index (BMI)?

- In simple terms, BMI is the ratio of a person's weight to height squared and is often used to estimate body composition.

# Why is it important to know my child's BMI?

- While BMI does not provide a total picture of one's health, it can provide useful information.
- BMI provides a better estimate of fatness than height/weight tables.
- BMI, when looked at over time, can provide useful insight for parents and doctors to assess whether a child's weight is progressing in a healthy pattern for his/her age and gender.

# Advantages of BMI

- Calculated quickly
- Cost effective
- Measurement is taken in a non-invasive way
- Measurement can be calculated and reported in a confidential manner

# Limitations of BMI

- Body Mass Index may falsely identify a very muscular lean child as over fat (too heavy for height)
- or
- A lightweight child with little muscular development and a large percent of fat as being in the “Healthy Fitness Zone” when the person is actually over fat.
- Not as accurate in predicting body fatness as skin-fold measurements or underwater weighing.

# Concerned?

- If you are concerned about your child's BMI report, please see your child's physical education teacher or consult your primary care provider.

# As a parent, how can you help to encourage a healthy BMI?

- Give your child equipment (balls, rope, hoops, etc.) that encourages physical activity.
- Encourage your child to spend less time watching T.V. and playing video games.
- Be a role model for your child. Be active together.
- Share physical activities you enjoyed when growing up.
- Use praise and encouragement, rather than nagging, to motivate your child to be active.
- Involve your child in sports, after school or recreation programs within your community .