

Annual School Health Screenings to include Body Mass Index

BMI Screening

Every year each student is screened for height, weight, vision, hearing and scoliosis by the medical office. Starting with school year 2008-2009, New York State is requiring we also calculate each student's BMI and send home a notice for those that are not in the average range. You have probably heard about BMI recently but are wondering exactly what that is and how we will be calculating this. Below you will find a brief description.

What is BMI?

BMI is an abbreviation for Body Mass Index. BMI is calculated from your child's weight, height, sex and age. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people and is used as a tool in treating children who may be overweight or underweight.

Understanding BMI

In adults BMI is rather easy to calculate and interpret, as a BMI between 25 and 30 is considered overweight and a BMI of 30 or above is considered obese.

With children, BMI is a bit more complicated. Since each child is unique and growing at their own pace, we must take into account the child's age and map boys and girls differently. Adding to the confusion, instead of a classification of overweight or obese, children are classified in four different categories. Please see the chart below.

WEIGHT STATUS CATEGORY	PERCENTILE RANGE
Underweight	Less than 5 th percentile
Healthy Weight	5 th to less than 85 th percentile
At Risk of Overweight	85 th to 95 th percentile
Overweight	95 th percentile and above

How is BMI used for children and teens?

The Center for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the use of BMI screening beginning at 2 years of age. If from our screening here at school, your child is found to be underweight, at risk of overweight, or you have specific concerns about your child's overall health, please contact your physician for further assessments to determine health risks.

If you do not want your child's clinical data to be included in this mandated report, please contact your child's school nurse for the paperwork you will need to exclude your child. No personal information is reported, only clinical data.