

Your midwife, child health nurse or doctor may suggest that your child is weighed more often than this if there are concerns about their health or growth.

My baby's weight was on one centile and now it is nearly down to the next line – is this normal?

It is normal for the dots of your child's weight to 'wiggle' up and down a bit or to move gradually from being near one centile to the next one (up or down). It is less common for a child's weight to cross two lines; if this happens, your midwife, child health nurse or doctor may want to keep a closer eye on your child for a while.

The most important thing is that, overall, your baby's weight and height is tracking upwards over time.

My child was ill and lost some weight – what should I do?

Children often lose some weight when they are not well. Once your child recovers from the illness, their weight should go back to the centile it was on before the illness within 2–3 weeks. If this does not happen, speak to your child health nurse or doctor.



Are these charts accurate for Māori and Pacific children?

A study by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that healthy breastfed babies in a number of countries, no matter what their ethnicity, grew in a similar way, at a similar rate. The growth charts used in the *Well Child/Tamariki Ora Health Book* are based on the information from the study.

Although Māori and Pacific children were not part of the WHO study, the charts appear to be appropriate for Māori children. Pacific children are often slightly bigger but still within the range of normal shown on the charts.

When should length or height be measured?

For babies and children under 2 years, length rather than height is measured. This can be helpful if there is any concern about weight gain. However, it is quite difficult to measure length accurately, so this will not be done every time your child is seen. It is not usually necessary to measure length or height if your child is growing as expected.



When should head circumference be measured?

Your baby's head circumference will usually be measured until they are 1 year old.

Why is it recommended that only trained health professionals plot on the charts?

It takes some practice to plot accurately on a centile chart. Any mistake can make your child's growth pattern look as if they have a problem when they don't. Or it can look as if they don't have a problem when they do. All health professionals using the

charts have had training so that they plot accurately on the charts and read them correctly.

If you want to weigh your baby for other reasons – to get an idea of the nappy size, for example – that's fine, but it is best not to plot their weight on the chart. If you do weigh your baby and are concerned about their weight, speak to your midwife, child health nurse or doctor before making a change to how you feed or care for your baby.

How do I make sure my child is not overweight?

Your child health nurse or doctor can discuss with you any concerns you have about this. After the age of 2 years, your child's weight and height can be used to calculate your child's centile for body mass index (BMI). If the BMI shows that your child is overweight or obese, you will be able to discuss diet and physical activity so that your child has a healthy weight as they grow.

For further information

If you have other questions, or would like further information about the growth charts, please talk to your midwife, child health nurse or doctor.

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New Zealand Government

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New Zealand - World Health Organization Growth Charts

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



Understanding growth charts: what they tell you about your child's growth

Your child's *Well Child/Tamariki Ora Health Book* has growth charts on which their height, weight and other measurements are plotted. This leaflet has information about the growth charts, how they have been developed, and how they are used.

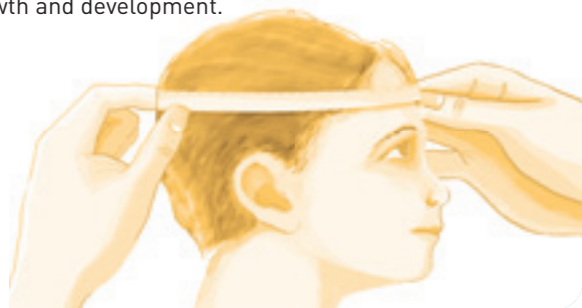


The New Zealand – World Health Organization growth charts

The growth charts in your child's *Well Child/Tamariki Ora Health Book* are based on measurements collected by the World Health Organization in six different countries and adapted from growth charts used in the United Kingdom. Healthy breastfed babies whose mothers did not smoke and who were from a healthy environment were measured over time. The growth charts use these measurements to show the range within which most healthy children are expected to grow.

What do regular measurements show?

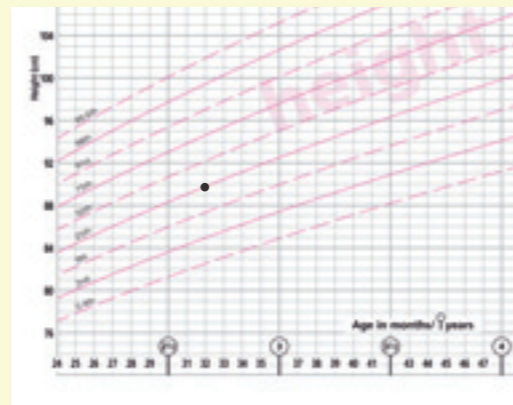
Weighing and measuring shows you that your child is growing and developing as expected. It also helps your midwife, child health nurse or doctor to tell if your child may have a problem that is affecting their growth and development.



Why do we use growth charts?

By plotting a child's growth on the chart, we can see whether they are following the expected pattern. The lines on a growth chart are called centile lines and are based on the measurements from many children. They show the range of normal weights and heights and how one child compares with other children of the same age and sex.

For example, if your child's height is on the 25th centile, it means that if you lined up 100 children of the same age and sex in order of height, your child would probably be number 25; 75 children would be taller than your child, and 24 would be shorter. Weights and heights that are anywhere within the centile lines on the chart are considered normal.



Every child is different, so no two filled-in charts will look the same. Even twins may have different growth patterns.

If a child's pattern looks unusual, your midwife, child health nurse or doctor may want to have a closer look to see what may be going on. This may involve taking more measurements, looking closely at feeding, or investigating other things. Most children who have such investigations are found to be well; however, any unusual pattern on the chart should be checked.

Frequently asked questions

I didn't breastfeed or I stopped early – are these charts still right for my baby?

The charts show how breastfed babies grow if they are healthy. Babies grow most naturally when fed on breast milk. If you use formula milk, you want to know that your baby is still growing in the same healthy pattern that they would on breast milk. The charts help you see if that is happening.

Why are there no centile lines on the charts between birth and 2 weeks?

Most babies lose some weight and then regain it during the 2 weeks after birth, and growth patterns vary widely during this time; the growth chart cannot show this. Your baby's weight at about 2 weeks of age should be compared with their birth weight.

How do I know my baby's weight is OK in the first 2 weeks?

Weighing in the early days is important. Babies usually lose some weight to start with but then put it back on. This regain of weight helps to show that your baby is well and that feeding is going well.

If your baby loses quite a lot of weight or is slow to get back to their birth weight, this is a sign to look a little closer. If the weight loss seems a lot, your midwife, child health nurse or doctor will calculate this as a percentage. If your baby has lost 10 percent or more of their birth weight, your midwife, child health nurse or doctor will probably check how your baby is feeding.

If you are breastfeeding, they will look at what you are doing to see if the baby is attaching to the breast properly. They may suggest some changes to the way you hold your baby or that you feed more often.

If you are giving formula milk, they may suggest that you hold your baby or the bottle differently or that you feed more often. They may also suggest that your baby has a medical examination.

If you make a change to how you feed your baby, it may take a little time for their weight to improve. Your midwife, child health nurse or doctor may want to weigh them again to follow their progress.

How often should my baby be weighed?

After the early days, your baby only needs to be weighed at the time of core Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks, as long as all is well. Some parents like to have their babies weighed more often than this. However, this is not always helpful and can cause unnecessary worry. For example, if one week your baby was weighed just after a big feed but the next week they were weighed after a big nap and before a feed, this could make it look as if they had not gained weight.

Weights measured over a longer time are more likely to show the true weight change. This is why it is recommended that babies should not be weighed more often than once a month from 2 weeks to 6 months of age, no more than every 2 months up to 1 year of age, and no more than every 3 months after that, unless there are special reasons. The time between weighing is longer for older babies because they are growing less quickly.

