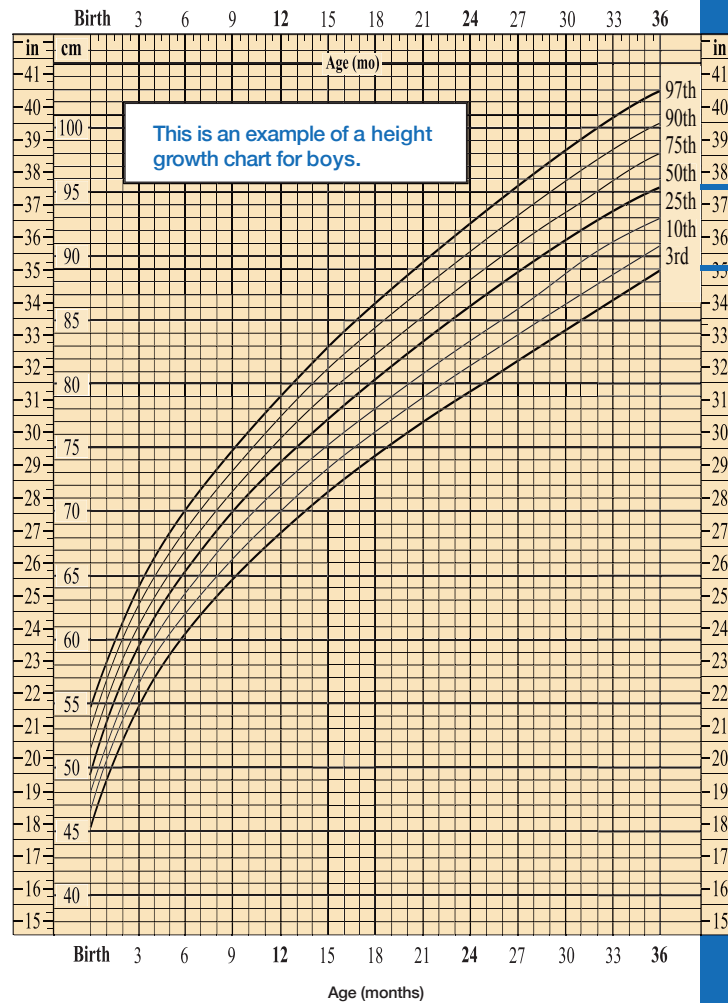


Facts about healthy growth

How your doctor keeps track

Most doctors track a child's growth using standard charts. Lines on the charts show the different growth rates of U.S. children. Your doctor measures your child at each checkup and marks the chart. This way, his or her growth can be compared with others of the same age. There are different charts for boys and girls. That's because they grow at different rates.



Source: Standard growth charts for males developed by the National Center for Health Statistics in collaboration with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2000).

This is the middle line on the height growth chart. It is called the "50th percentile." The growth rate of half of all children will be above this line. The other half will be below.

This is the "3rd percentile." Children born small for gestational age (SGA) will be at or below this line at birth. Children experiencing catch-up growth may "cross" percentile lines as they catch up.

What is "normal" growth?

Of course, every child is unique. But there are general guidelines that doctors use to be sure your child is growing healthfully.

- During the first year of life, babies grow at their fastest rate
- A child grows about half as fast in the second year
- Most 2-year-olds will weigh nearly 4 times their birth weight
 - Their average height is about 35 inches
- Children usually grow 4 to 5 inches between their first and second years
- After age 2, they usually grow at a steady rate until puberty
 - They gain about 7 pounds and 2½ to 3 inches in height per year





Checkups: key to healthy growth

Doctor visits are a very important part of keeping any child healthy. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises these guidelines for routine visits for a healthy child.

- During the first year: at birth, 2-4 days, 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, and 12 months
- During the second year: at 15, 18, and 24 months
- From then on, yearly visits are a good idea

Your doctor will decide when you can skip a visit. Of course, more visits will be needed when your child is sick or has a health condition.

At each visit, the doctor or nurse measures both height and weight. This way, they can make sure that your child is growing at a healthy rate. It's important to keep these appointments consistently over time. It's the best way to help your doctor keep track of your child's growth.

When growth failure is an issue

Your doctor will notice if your child is not growing normally. Tests may be done to find out the cause.

There are many causes of growth failure. Often the cause is unknown. Some children with growth failure don't make enough growth hormone of their own. (Growth hormone is made in the brain. We all need it to grow.) These children have growth hormone deficiency (GHD).

Some children are born "small for gestational age" (SGA). These kids are smaller at birth than most kids after the same length of pregnancy. There may have been a growth problem during pregnancy. Or abnormal genes may be the cause. Most SGA babies catch up to other kids by age 2. But some kids don't.

**Do you think your child may have a growth problem?
Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have questions or concerns.**