Frequently Asked Questions for Health Care Providers:
Provincial Pediatric Obesity Prevention and Management for Children Aged 2 to 17 years

1. Why is overweight/obesity a concern in pediatric populations?
   Obesity is a complex chronic disease that affects individuals across the lifespan. In Canada, approximately 32% of children aged 5-17 are overweight or have obesity\textsuperscript{1}. Overweight and obesity are linked to increased risk for other conditions (e.g., asthma, metabolic risk factors) and lower reported quality of life\textsuperscript{2,3}.

   Childhood obesity is associated with adult overweight and obesity, making early detection and intervention essential for long term health and lifestyle outcomes\textsuperscript{4}.

2. What can I do as a Health Care Provider to support healthy growth and development?
   • Annual growth monitoring including measuring height and weight and calculating BMI
   • Plot height, weight and BMI on appropriate growth chart for age and sex\textsuperscript{*}
   • Discuss growth with the child and family
   • Reinforce healthy living messages
   • Actively engage the entire family
   • Discuss potential lifestyle changes with the family, including barriers and possible solutions
   • Encourage positive parenting behaviours

Table 1: BMI-for-age Cut-offs for Children Aged 2-19 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>Growth Status (Health Professional reference only)</th>
<th>Key Messages for Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years\textsuperscript{**}</td>
<td>5-19 years</td>
<td>Healthy Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥3\textsuperscript{rd} to ≤85\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>≥3\textsuperscript{rd} to ≤85\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Healthy Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;85\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Risk of Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;97\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>&gt;85\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;99.9\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>&gt;97\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Obese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>&gt;99.9\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Severely Obese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{**}Up to but not including 5 years of age.

Table adapted from AHS Protocol: Growth Chart Use

*For information on protocols, training, growth charts and resources for Childhood Growth Monitoring please visit http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/cgm.asp. For guidance on how to discuss growth with families please http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/cgm/if-hp-cgm-pediatric-growth-discussions-tool.pdf
In addition, if the child’s BMI is above the 85th percentile for age and sex:

- Conduct a thorough medical assessment (assessment of root causes of overweight/obesity, identification of overweight/obesity related comorbidities).
- Explore motivation and readiness for change.
- Assess perceptions of body image, self-esteem and social support and provide support as required.
- If weight management support is needed, help families determine which intervention is most appropriate for them.
- Maintain a supportive alliance with families throughout the duration of their weight management intervention.
- Collaborate with other health care professionals that are involved with the child/family’s weight management intervention.

3. What Provincial Pediatric Weight Management services are available in Alberta?

There are three Provincial Pediatric Weight Management services available for children and their families across the province. These services are dedicated to helping children and families reach their healthy lifestyle goals and promote healthy growth and development.

Provincial Pediatric Weight Management Services:

- **MEND: Mind Exercise Nutrition Do it!**
  Community based healthy lifestyle program for children ages 2-13 years and their families in a group setting.
- **Outpatient Dietitian Counselling**
  Nutrition and lifestyle counselling by a Registered Dietitian for children ages 2-17 years and their families (available throughout the province)
- **Pediatric Centres for Weight and Health**
  Multidisciplinary care team approach for children ages 2-17 years and their families (clinics located in Edmonton and Calgary).
4. How can I refer children/families to Provincial Pediatric Weight Management Services?

**MEND**
A referral is not required. Information on programs available and registration can be found at [www.albertahealthservices.ca/MEND.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/MEND.asp)

**Outpatient Dietitian Counselling and Pediatric Centres for Weight and Health**
One referral form is used for both Outpatient Dietitian Counselling and the Pediatric Centres for Weight and Health (PCWH).

Referral Form: [Provincial Pediatric Weight Management Referral (Ages 2-17 years)](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/MEND.asp)

Please complete all areas of the form as incomplete referrals will result in processing and access delays. Fax completed forms to AHS Central Access at (780) 735-3553 or toll free fax 1 (866) 979-3553.

Children must meet the following criteria to access care:
- Referral by a Physician or Nurse Practitioner
- Ages 2 to 17 years
- Body Mass Index (BMI) above the 85th percentile

Referral from a Physician or Nurse Practitioner ensures that eligible children have undergone a comprehensive medical assessment to identify underlying causes and co-morbid conditions related to excess weight.

6. Why do Pediatric Weight Management Services start at age 2?

There is no consensus by experts regarding the definition of overweight for children less than 2 years of age. For these children, goals are promotion of healthy behaviours and achievement of a healthy growth pattern. If a concerning growth pattern has been identified, further medical assessment should be conducted. In addition, Registered Dietitians can provide assessment on feeding and nutrition behaviours and lifestyle factors which could explain a significant upward shift in growth pattern. Health care providers can access a dietitian by visiting the AHS Website: [http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=5920](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=5920)

7. Where can I find resources for Pediatric Weight Management?

Please visit the Chronic Disease Management Resource Centre at [http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7468.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7468.asp)

Questions about Provincial Pediatric Weight Management Services can be directed to the Provincial Bariatric Resource Team at provincialbariatricresourceteam@albertahealthservices.ca

For more information please visit the Alberta Health Services Provincial Pediatric Weight Management website: [http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/8353.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/8353.asp)
References


