

10 Ten things you need to know about the new UK-WHO 0-4 years growth charts



1. **New UK growth charts are being introduced using the WHO standard for children from birth to four years.**
 - They should be used for all babies born in England after May 11th 2009.
 - The existing UK90 growth charts will continue to be used for children over 4 years and also for any children who already have one.
 - The new charts, developed by the RCPCH for the Department of Health, are available in both A5 (personal child health record) and A4 format and can be downloaded free of charge from www.growthcharts.rcpch.ac.uk or purchased from specialist suppliers.
2. **The WHO charts for the first time describe optimal rather than average growth and set breastfeeding as the norm.**
 - The new charts were constructed using data from healthy breastfed children from around the world who had no known health or environmental constraints to growth.
 - They should be used for all infants however they are fed.
3. **The charts can be used for all ethnic groups.**
 - The WHO have shown that infants worldwide show very similar patterns of linear growth.
4. **The new charts will make weight patterns look different from age 6 months.**
 - On the new charts only 1/200 children will be below 2nd centile for weight after the age of 6 months and there will be twice as many children above the 98th centile.
 - Length and height show a very good fit to UK children.
5. **All health professionals who use charts should receive some training.**
 - The Department of Health recommend that occasional users receive 30 minutes and regular users 2 hours training.
 - Materials suitable for both experienced staff and students are downloadable for free from www.growthcharts.rcpch.ac.uk
6. **The new charts are going to look different and chart users need to familiarise themselves with the changes.**
 - The new charts and chart instructions were developed using focus groups of parents and professionals.
 - Though unfamiliar at first they should be clearer and easier to use in the long term.
7. **The new charts have a separate preterm section and clear instructions on gestational correction.**
 - A new low birth weight chart will also be available from May for use for any preterm infant below 32 weeks.
8. **The charts have no lines between 0 and 2 weeks.**
 - Children show highly variable weight loss and gain in the early days after birth, so users are encouraged to assess percentage weight loss rather than plot before 2 weeks.
 - At the age of two weeks, for the first time, the charts allow for slower neonatal weight gain so a drop sustained to 2 weeks will no longer be normal.
9. **The 50th percentile is no longer emphasised.**
 - Parents tend to expect all healthy children to be on the 50th centile.
 - To help plotting there are centile labels at both ends of each curve and more subtle indicators of the 50th percentile.
10. **The instructions draw on research evidence and UK policy on screening and referral and should be relevant to the majority of users.**
 - They define when a measurement or growth pattern is outside range of normality and advise when further assessment is advisable.
 - All information in the personal child health record is now aimed at parents.