

# Guide to weighing and measuring your child at home to check their growth

Nutrition and Dietetics

Information for Parents and Carers

Last reviewed: January 2025

Next review: January 2028

Leaflet number: 965 Version: 3

## Introduction

Growth is usually checked at clinic appointments or on visits from healthcare staff. There may be times when parents are asked to do these at home.

Knowing how to measure babies and children correctly allows healthcare staff to check progress and spot any concerns quickly. This can help at a time when it may be difficult for parents/ carers to come to a routine check up or clinic appointment.

Talk to your healthcare professional if you are worried about any changes. There may be a number of reasons for this.

## Guide to weighing

If set correctly, digital scales can be better and are easier to read than mechanical scales.

If using a mechanical scale (see picture to the right) check the dial is pointing to zero before using. This is to make sure you get the right reading.

This can be done by turning the dial which is found at the back or on the bottom of the scales.

Put the scales on a hard, flat and even surface. Do not put it on a carpet or rug. Weigh your child at the same time of the day. This can be in the morning before breakfast. This can help lessen changes in weight from eating or drinking.

Please know that a small difference in weight using two different scales (household scales and clinical scales) is common.



**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

**For children aged under 2 or children who are unable to stand:**

Only try to lift your child to weigh them if you are safe to do so.

**Children younger than 2 years of age should be weighed with no clothes on.**

1. You will need a household scale, pen and paper. It may be easier if another adult is there to help.
2. Switch the flat digital scales on and wait for them to read zero. Or check the dial on the mechanical scales points to zero.
3. The first person should take off their shoes and stand on the scale by themselves.
4. Using the pen and paper, write down the number in the display (**Weight 1**).
5. Now repeat steps 2 and 3 with your child in your arms. If you have someone helping you, ask them to write down this new weight. If not, take note of this new weight and write it down when safe to do so (**Weight 2**).
6. You can test the above steps with person 1 and 2 changing places. This is to see if the difference in weight (the child's weight) is the same.
7. Repeat these steps 2 more times. Give all results to your healthcare professional who will work out an average and plot on a growth chart.

Example:

<b>Weight 1 (adult)</b>	<b>Weight 2 (adult with child)</b>	<b>Estimated weight of child (Weight 2 — Weight 1)</b>
85.2kg	87.9kg	2.7kg
84.9kg	87.5kg	2.6kg
84.9kg	87.6kg	2.7kg

**For children aged over 2 years old:**

For children older than 2 years, weigh with few clothes on (like a vest, underwear or dry nappy).

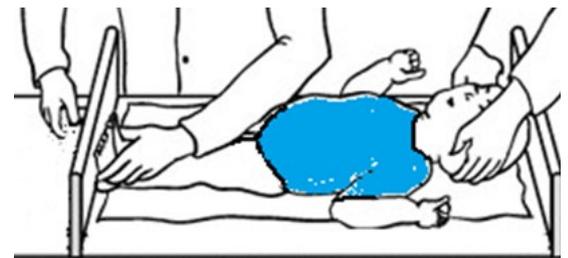
1. One adult can do this measurement. You will need a scale, pen and paper.
2. Ask the child to stand still on the scale by themselves. Try to make sure the child stands as still as possible and is not holding your hand or touching any walls, or doors. Doing this will affect the result.
3. Using the pen and paper, write down the number in the display.
4. Repeat these steps 2 more times. Give all results to your healthcare professional who will work out an average and plot on a growth chart.

## Guide to measuring length/ height

### For children under 2 years old:

It can be difficult to measure a baby's length. This is harder if they move a lot. If possible, try to choose a time when your baby is calm and relaxed.

1. If another adult is there, ask them to help you gently stretch out and push down on your baby's legs to get the most accurate measurement.
2. Lay your baby down on a flat surface. It may help to place a blanket on the floor. Position the top of their head against a wall. Use a soft measuring tape to measure the baby from the top of the head to the heel.
3. You could also lay them down on top of a sheet of paper on a flat surface. Mark the sheet under the baby with a pencil at the top of the head and again at the bottom of the heel. Remove the baby and measure the length between the 2 marks. Remove the baby and measure the length between the 2 marks.
4. Make sure the measurement is taken from the heel in a flat position. You can use a chopping board or a hard back book as a foot rest. The toes should be pointing up towards the ceiling.
5. Repeat the measurement. Give all the numbers to your healthcare professional who will work out an average and plot on a growth chart.

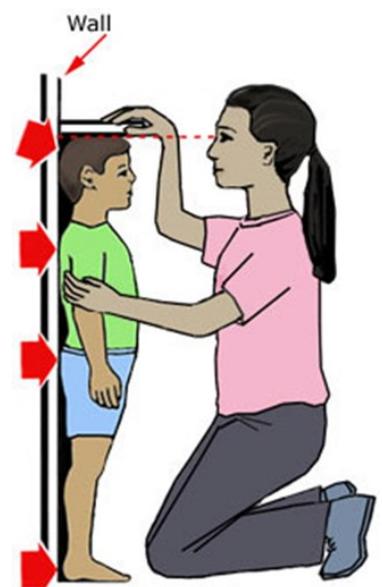


You can view a video demonstration by the British Dietetic Association from this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tx5NVwkqpYk&feature=youtu.be>

### For children aged over 2 years old:

1. Remove the child's shoes, hair pieces and unbraid hair that might effect measurements.
2. Take the height measurement on a hard floor (not a carpet or rug) and against a flat surface such as a wall.
3. Stand the child with their feet flat and together. Make sure legs are straight, arms are at sides and shoulders are level.
4. Make sure the child is looking straight ahead. It may help to give them something to focus on, such as a toy that they can play with afterwards.
5. Take the measurement while the child stands with head, shoulders, bottom and heels touching the wall.
6. Use a flat headpiece like a book or piece of card to form a right angle with the wall. Lower the headpiece until it firmly touches the top of the head.





7. Make sure your eyes are at the same level as the headpiece.
8. Lightly mark where the bottom of the headpiece meets the wall. Then measure from the floor to the mark on the wall to get the height.
9. Write down the height to the nearest 1cm. Give the results to your healthcare professional who will plot on a growth chart.

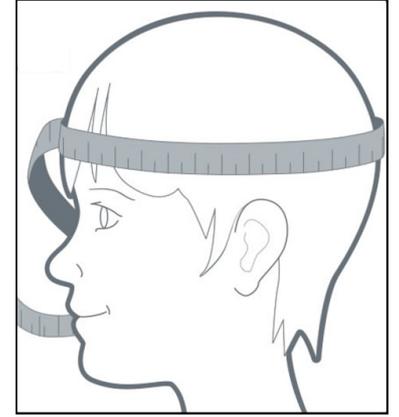
You can view a video demonstration by the British Dietetic Association from this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djsiSCIKJUs&feature=youtu.be>

## Measuring the heads of children under 2 years old

Taking a measurement around the head is usually done in children less than 2 years of age. Checking the distance around your baby's head (circumference) is a good way to check growth.

1. The measurement should be taken with something that cannot be stretched, such as a flexible paper tape measure. The healthcare professional can give you this.
2. Wrap the tape snugly around the widest part of the head. This is from the forehead (often 1 to 2 fingers above the eyebrow) to the back of the head (as shown).
3. Repeat 2 more times. Give all measurements to your healthcare professional who will work out an average and plot on a growth chart.



## Contact details

If you have any questions about the information provided you can contact the Nutrition and Dietetic Department on 0116 258 5400.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।  
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)