



BEVERLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
502 Cabot Street
Beverly, Massachusetts 01915
Telephone (978) 921-6100
Fax (978) 922-6597
www.beverlyschools.org

James J. Hayes, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Marie E. Galinski, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent

Dear Parent or Guardian,

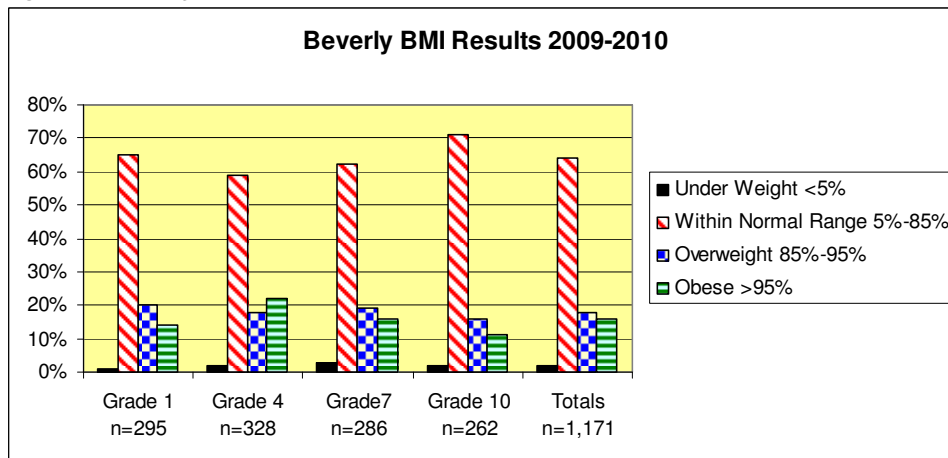
Recently, your child was weighed and measured as part of the Body Mass Index (BMI) Mandated Screening Program, a way to check to see if your child has a healthy weight. The results of the screening compare your child's height and weight to other children of the same age and sex by being given a "percentile." Your child's BMI is only being shared with you and no one else will see these results. In the envelope included, your child's individual results are listed on the BMI graph that was generated by your school nurse.

The categories used for analyzing BMI are:

- Underweight- less than the 5th percentile
- Healthy weight- 5th percentile to the 85th percentile
- Overweight- 85th percentile to 95th percentile
- Obese- 95th percentile or greater

In Figure 1, the BMI results for each grade are delineated. Of the 1,171 students measured in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 reveal that over 60% of students are within the normal weight range. However, when looking at the children whose BMI is 85% or greater (combining overweight and obese categories) than their peers, Beverly's data reveals that over 30% of children in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 are overweight and/or obese.

Figure 1. Beverly BMI results for Grades 1, 4, 7, and 10



BMI may not tell the whole story about your child's weight. Other things can affect your child's BMI. For example, BMI cannot tell the difference between muscle and fat. An athletic child with a lot of muscle may have a high BMI but not be overweight.

As a school district we are in the planning stages in developing new initiatives that will support the current health, physical fitness, and nutritional programs that are currently in place. We will do our best to support your efforts at home in creating healthy choices and activities for your children. You can learn more from these websites: www.Mass.Gov/MassInMotion, www.actionforhealthykids.org, and www.mypyramid.gov. There are also numerous resources available to all parents on the Health Services webpage. Go to the Beverly Schools home page (www.beverlyschools.org) and look under "Parents" for the "Health Services" drop down link. On the reverse side of this paper are frequently asked questions about BMI.

If you have further questions do not hesitate to call me at 978-922-3229 ext 1165.

Sincerely,

Cathy Riccio RN MSN
Nurse Leader, Beverly Public Schools

To enable all students to reach their potential through an academically challenging and diverse education.



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Frequently Asked questions About Body Mass Index (BMI Screening)

Why are schools doing BMI screening?

In an effort to promote a healthy lifestyle, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) wants to help all people in Massachusetts maintain a healthy weight. As a state, when compared to the nation, Massachusetts ranked 4th best in adults with healthy weight but only 26th best for children with healthy weight. People who are overweight or obese can have serious health problems as well as people who are underweight. Parents who have information about their children's BMI and ideas about how to help their children with healthy living can make sure their kids maintain a healthy weight. Community leaders who have information about how many children in their community are in each weight range can work with parents, school officials, after school programs and many others, to come up with ideas to help even more children get into a healthier weight range.

Public schools have been measuring the height and weight of students for many years as part of yearly growth screening. Recently, the DPH passed a law that requires schools to use this information to calculate BMI for students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. It also requires schools to share the BMI results with the child's parents and guardians in a way that keeps the results private.

Why is BMI screening important to children and families?

BMI is a way to detect possible weight problems for children. A BMI below the 5th percentile may mean a child is not growing well or that he or she may be at risk for an eating disorder. Children with a BMI above the 85th percentile are overweight. Those above the 95th percentile are obese. Overweight or obese kids are more likely to be overweight adults. This puts them at risk for a number of health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

What can I do to help my child be healthier?

You can talk with your child's doctor about his or her BMI. You can also help your child eat 3 balanced meals a day. These meals should include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and fish, and low-fat or non-fat milk. You should limit foods high in sugar and fat. For example, avoid soda and other foods that have lots of calories but no nutritional value.

In addition, you should encourage your children to be active for at least an hour each day and limit how much time they spend watching TV or playing on the computer. **The local Sterling Center YMCA has developed special fitness programs just for children and their families who have had recent BMI screens through the schools. Some of these programs are free for the first 40 participants until the end of the school year! Please call Andrew Walker at Sterling Center YMCA at 978-564-3486 for specific information. The Beverly Public Schools are grateful to our community partners.**

How should I talk with my child about his or her results?

You can start by saying that the BMI screening gives you and your child information about how he or she is growing. Rather than talking about BMI, you can talk about ways to stay healthy and active.

If you and your child have talked about these topics before, either at home or in the doctor's office, you can remind your child how this fits in with what you have already discussed. You can also ask your child if he or she has any questions about the program. Encouraging your child to share feelings about his or her growing and changing body will let him or her know it is okay to talk about these things with you.

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How will the school protect my child's results so they are not teased or embarrassed by other students?

Schools have been measuring heights and weights for many years and are very good at keeping the results private. Results will be mailed directly to parents or guardians. The new law requires schools to make sure the results are not shared with anyone else.