

Williamson County School System

Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening Process

- Our school system views screenings as a service provided by our school system as a health and wellness benefit to your child.
- BMI is a required screening by the state of Tennessee's Coordinated School Health department for grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 9.
- A letter is sent out in the fall to each student providing information on the process.
- Due to the size of our school system, reverse permission is utilized. (Parents/guardians must contact the school if they do not want their child screened.)
- All measurements are private and confidential with every feasible measure is taken to protect the child.
- Per the state of Tennessee and its Coordinated School Health initiative, East Tennessee State University generates a school system and state report (no individual names or identifiers). This allows for a more accurate evaluation of our school system in comparison to state and national trends regarding BMI.

Important Reminders

- The measurement of body fat is important since excessive body fat or too little body fat greatly increases the chance for health risks.
- Though a respected tool, BMI is not the best way to measure a person's body fat. In dealing with a mass population though, it is currently the best method available.
- The human body goes through many natural changes through the elementary, middle school and high school years. This can affect a BMI screening result.
- A BMI reading does not lead to the correct conclusion 100% of the time. For example, a child may fall into the overweight risk category but actually be well defined and muscular and not be at a current health risk level.
- Regardless of the BMI result, it should be kept in proper perspective. If there are any concerns, parents may choose to ask questions of health professionals, those who a parent knows can provide an expert opinion. A child's personal physician is an excellent resource.
- BMI is simply a tool and one of many resources used to help assess possible health risk. It is not a strict standard and should not be interpreted as such. Other tools a parent could choose to pursue include the measurement of body fat composition and waist circumference to confirm the BMI's accuracy and the current health risk level.
- Part of this process should include projecting the child's healthy adult weight range and setting a course of action(s) that allows him or her to grow into this range.
- If you'd like more information and even have your BMI calculated for you, visit the Center for Disease Control web site at <http://www.cdc.gov> Scroll to the bottom of the page and under tools and resources there is a link for a BMI calculator.

Healthy Recommendations for all School Community Members

- Be involved in consistent, healthy lifestyle practices and follow sound nutritional guidelines for healthy eating, not a fad or crash diet. (Foods and drinks such as candy, chips and soft drinks should be limited.)
- Families should encourage physical activity rather than television, non-educational computer use and video games. (Today's child averages 6.5 hours per day using these various forms of media.)
- Communication between families and schools is strongly encouraged. Our schools are a great resource for health related information.