

CEL 20 (2012)

14 June 2012

Dear Colleague

INTRODUCTION OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICS AND CHILD HEALTH (RCPCH) SCHOOL-AGE (2-18 YEARS) GROWTH CHARTS

This letter is to advise you of the introduction of new RCPCH Growth Charts in Scotland for school-age children and to request that you ensure the growth charts are purchased and adopted for use from 1 January 2013. In addition, I would be grateful if you could ensure this information is disseminated to all relevant staff within your Board area.

Background

RCPCH has developed growth charts for older children to provide the same quality of design as was used in the UK-WHO pre-school growth charts, adopted in Scotland in January 2010. The new charts are designed to be more simple, accurate and relevant than previous versions and were launched at the RCPCH annual conference in Glasgow on 22-24 May. They combine data from the WHO growth standards up to age 4 years and the UK 1990 growth reference from 4-18 years. As with the pre-school charts, RCPCH has undertaken a rigorous programme of research, consultation and formal evaluation to design the 2-18 years charts and once published these will be the only school-age charts recommended by RCPCH.

The new school-age (2-18 years) charts have been designed as the follow on charts from the UK-WHO pre-school charts (32 weeks gestation to 4 years) and the Neonatal Infant Close Monitoring (NICM) Chart (23 weeks gestation to 2 years). The charts are an A3 book folded to A4, with 2-8 years for girls (9 for boys) on the left inside page (together with the birth centile lookup) and 8 (or 9)-18 years on the right.

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives – NHS
Boards
Child Health Commissioners
CHP Managers
Clinical Education Leads,
Regional Planning Groups

For information

Board Chairs
Finance Directors
Directors of Nursing
HR Directors
Medical Directors
Directors of Public Health
Primary Care Leads
Chair of NHS Public Health
Nutrition Group
Scottish Dietetic Managers
Group
Royal College of Paediatrics
and Child Health
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of General
Practitioners
Other

Enquiries to:

Mary Sloan
Area 2B North
Victoria Quay, Leith
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

Tel: 0131-244 4089
Fax: 0131-244 1475
Point of contact

mary.sloan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

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The charts aim to combine the simplicity of the previous “community” chart with the detail provided in the “four in one chart” and should be suitable for use in both a hospital and community setting. The charts include detailed instructions so that professionals can familiarise themselves with them independently. Please see the Annex and <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/child-health/research-projects/uk-who-growth-charts/uk-who-growth-chart-resources/uk-who-growth-ch-0> for further information.

The weighing and measuring of children is embedded in national policy and local practice. The *Health for All Children* (Hall 4) guidance issued in 2005 set out the core programme of child health screening and surveillance contacts. For this age group, the programme outlines that children should be weighed and measured at 3-5 years, on entry to primary school and that Body Mass Index (BMI) be recorded for public health monitoring purposes every 3 years from 2007/08. This routine will not change through the adoption of the RCPCH school-age growth charts, nor will there be any change to clinical practice in weighing and measuring children as part of any clinical care or treatment. If BMI centile is to be recorded instead, this will now be much simpler, using the BMI centile lookup. Unlike the pre-school charts, the school-age charts will be less used for screening and surveillance purposes and more for the assessment of possible growth problems.

Availability of the charts

The charts will be available for purchase from Harlow Printing (www.harlowprinting.co.uk) and NHS Boards should order these in the same way as the current 5-20 years charts. They are likely to cost less than the previous charts as there will be no copyright charge.

New pages for the Personal Child Health Record (Red Book) to cover the period 4-18 years will be issued. These will include height and weight, and a BMI centile look up.

Training

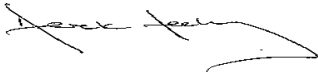
As the new charts have a number of new features (see Annex), adoption should ideally be accompanied by training, although the charts can be used without training by experienced staff for the plotting of height and weight only. RCPCH has produced instructions which have been carefully worded and evaluated to ensure that they fully explain the use of the charts, the assessment of growth and puberty, and the circumstances when further investigations are needed, to allow professionals to familiarise themselves with them independently. This is the first time chart instructions for school-aged children have been based on objective evidence.

The need for training in the use of the charts will depend on who is using them and for what purpose. RCPCH estimates that regular users may need between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours training in the new features, depending on whether practical exercises are undertaken too. Doctors will be able to self train in their use and school nurses who plot standard measurements should not require training. If the charts are used for nursing activities such as the use of BMI or pubertal assessment, training may be necessary. NHS Boards will need to consider local referral thresholds and pathways, and whether training is necessary. Training materials developed by RCPCH will be available for this purpose. If there is demand, RCPCH will provide “train the trainer” sessions for a small charge.

Next steps

Chief Executives and other addressees are asked to ensure that this information is cascaded as appropriate to all relevant staff to ensure a successful rollout of the new charts from 1 January 2013.

Yours sincerely,



DEREK FEELEY
Director General Health & Social Care and Chief Executive NHS Scotland

ANNEX

INTRODUCTION OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICS AND CHILD HEALTH (RCPCH) SCHOOL-AGE (2-18 YEARS) GROWTH CHARTS

New features

- A BMI centile lookup and plotting grid

The charts start at 2 years to allow back plotting of earlier measurements for children first presenting in childhood and to follow on directly for preterm and other infants who have been plotted on the Neonatal Infant Close Monitoring (NICM) chart since birth. The second page provides guidance on the normal range of age for pubertal progression and the assessment of growth in children with relative late puberty.

The charts include a BMI centile look up and plotting grid to allow the easy calculation and monitoring of BMI across childhood. This will allow a wider range of staff to use BMI without the need for calculation or plotting on a new chart.

- Scales to estimate adult height and compare with parents' height

The charts include scales to allow prediction of adult height and comparison of the child's centile with mid parental centile without the need for calculation. This will allow staff in secondary care to easily calculate mid parental centile and assess whether growth is proceeding as expected.

- A simplified way of assessing puberty without the need for intimate examinations

The new charts also include guidance on the normal range of age for pubertal progression and the assessment of growth in children with relative late puberty, without the need for intimate examinations. This should help the early recognition of teenagers with growth problems for users in the community, while preventing unnecessary referrals.

RCPCH intends also to pilot a new Pubertal Phase Specific reference chart for use alongside the 2-18 charts which will allow more specialist users to adjust for pubertal phase as well as age and gender.

Further information

The charts, education and training materials, a presentation and a factsheet can be viewed at: <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/child-health/research-projects/uk-who-growth-charts/uk-who-growth-chart-resources/uk-who-growth-ch-0>.