

# News For SWIM PARENTS

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## Are Ideal Weight Charts Meaningful?

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Question: A 10 year-old child who swims for times a week for 90 minutes weighs more than the published "ideal weight" for his age and height, but the child does not appear to be overweight. Are ideal weight charts meaningful? Should the child be placed on a diet?

Answer: Ideal weight charts are only applicable for people who are 18 years of age and older. Growth charts are used for people younger than 18 years. Growth charts express a percentile rank of height, weight, or height-to-weight ratio. Using growth charts, doctors can compare a child's development growth pattern with population normals. Just because a child is in the 95th percentile for weight does not necessarily indicate that the child is overweight. It is possible for a child 10 to 12 years of age to drop from the 95th percentile of weight to the 50th percentile during 1 year of rapid growth. A child who is in the upper percentiles of weight should not automatically be placed on a diet. A restrictive diet could be more harmful than helpful for a child who is preparing for puberty. If they feel that their child is overweight, the parents should discuss the issue with their child's doctor; but, if the child does not appear to be overweight, chances are that he or she is not.