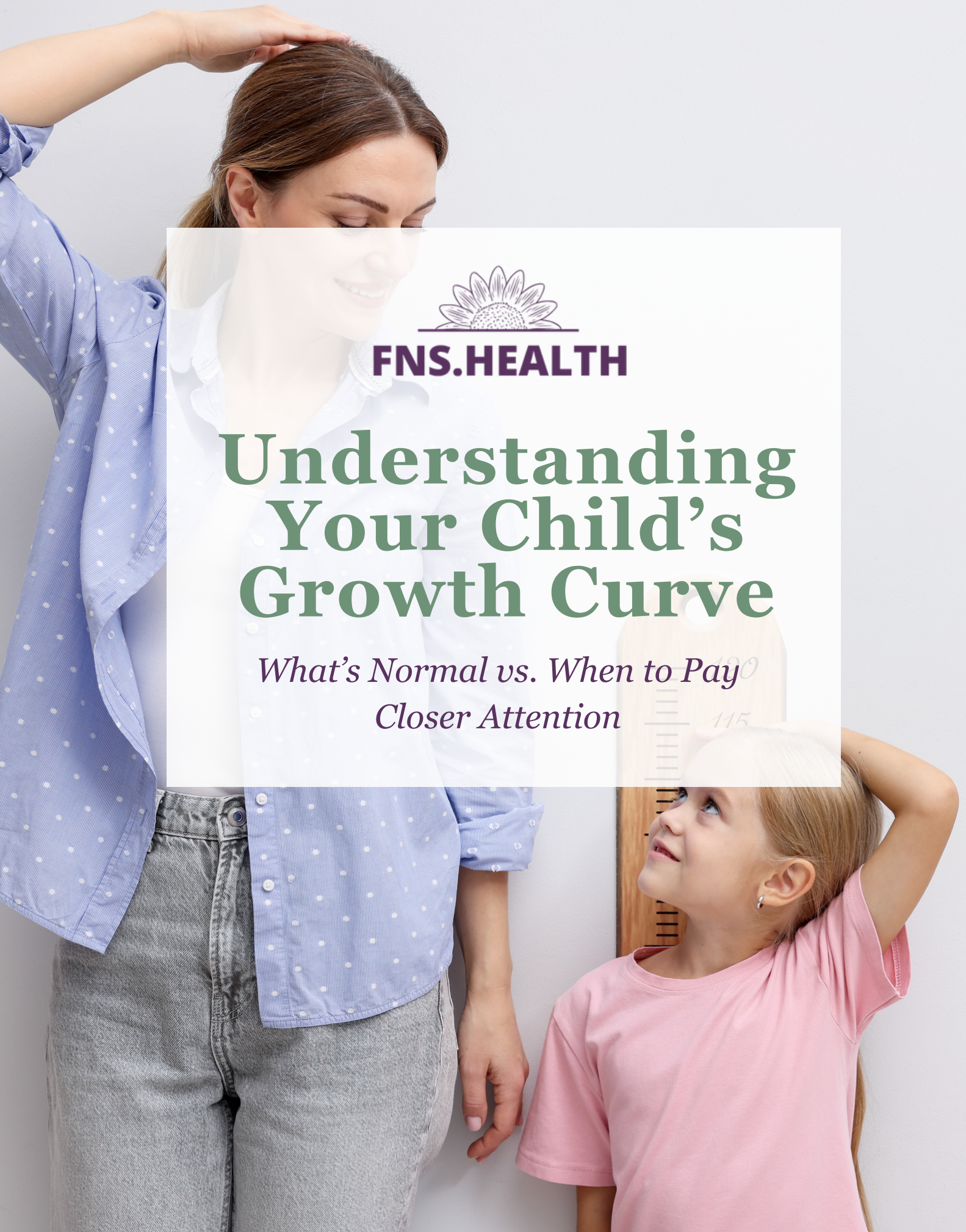




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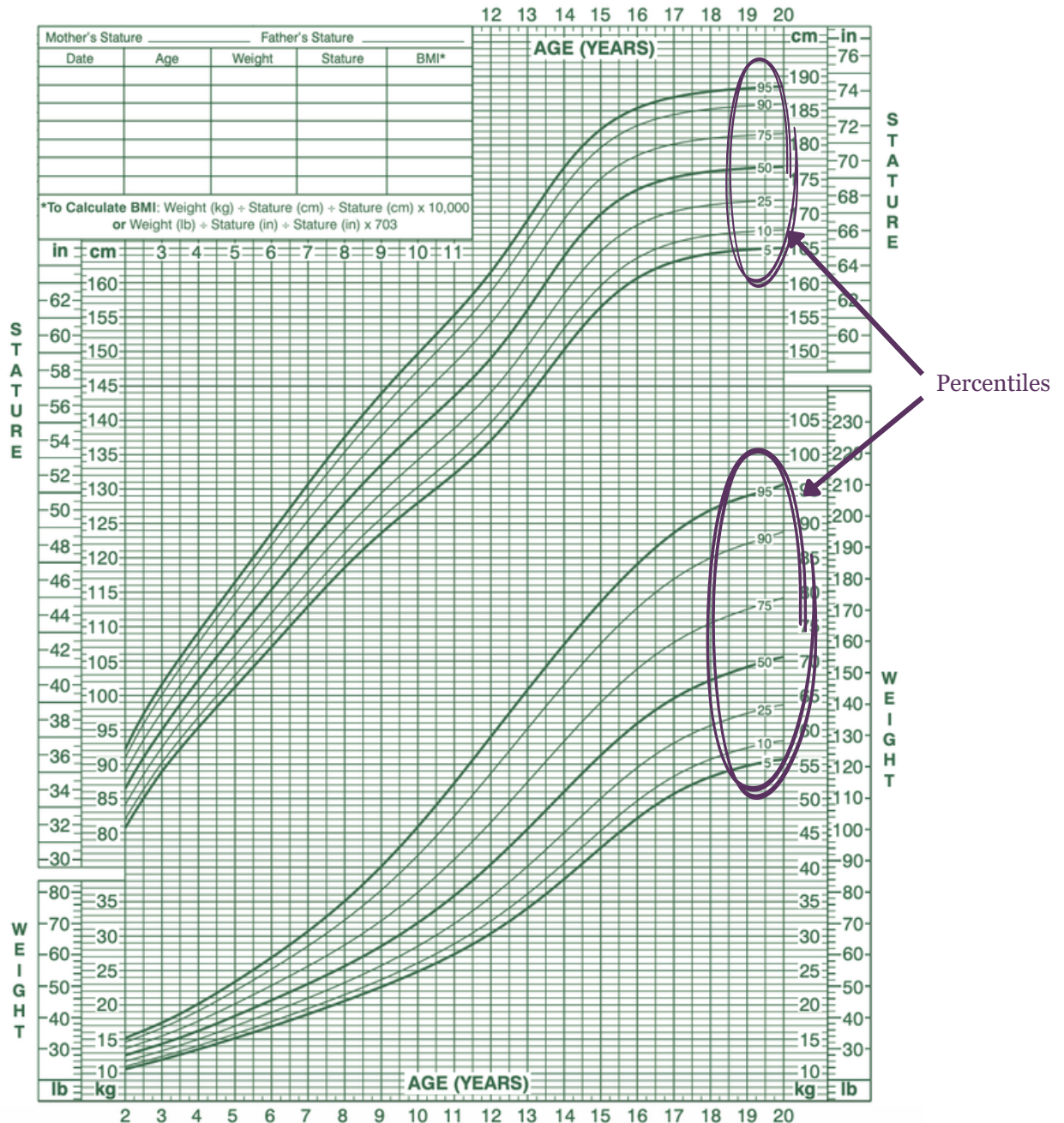
Understanding Your Child's Growth Curve

*What's Normal vs. When to Pay
Closer Attention*



What is A Growth Curve?

Growth curves track your child's stature (height/length), height, head circumference, and sometimes BMI. These measurements are plotted over time (age) to create a growth pattern.



What does percentile mean?

A percentile shows how your child compares to other children of the same age and sex.

If your child is in the 30th percentile:

- They are bigger than 30% of kids
- and smaller than 70% of kids

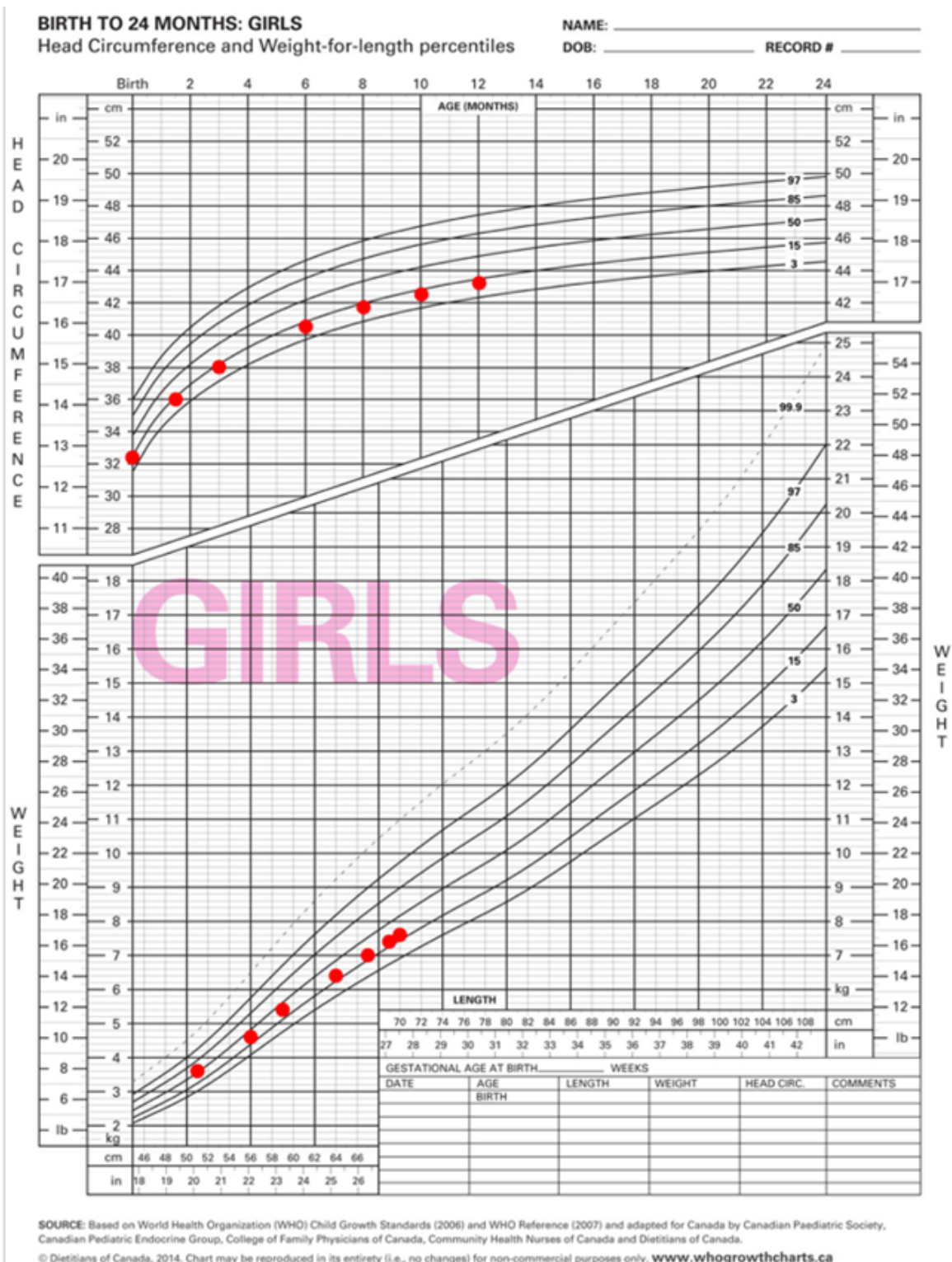


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GROWTH CURVE EXAMPLES

Your healthcare provider will plot your child’s measurements on a growth chart and help you interpret what the patterns mean over time. The examples below are simply to help you get familiar with what growth charts can look like — your provider will help you understand what’s relevant for your child.

Normal Growth



[illegible]

What's Normal vs. When to Pay Closer Attention

Growth charts are a tool, not a judgement of your child's health or your parenting. Bigger doesn't mean healthier, and smaller doesn't mean something is wrong. Patterns over time matter most!

What Normal Growth Looks Like

The most important factor: **consistency over time**

- staying on or near their curve
- small ups and downs are normal
- growth happens in spurts, not straight lines
- appetite naturally fluctuates
- genetics play a big role



A child in the 10th percentile who stays there may be growing perfectly well.

What Can Look Concerning (But Often Isn't)

These situations are common and usually temporary:

- a single low weight measurement
- weight changes after illness
- toddler “picky eating” phases
- sudden appetite drops or increases

Kids don't grow steadily – they grow in bursts

When To Pay Closer Attention

For slower or decreased growth:

- crossing 2 or more percentile lines downward
- ongoing decline across multiple visits to your healthcare provider
- falling off their usual growth pattern
- very limited intake + slow or poor growth

For faster or increased growth:

- rapidly crossing percentile lines upward over a short period of time
- sudden, significant changes in weight without clear explanation
- growth that seems out of proportion to height over time
- noticeable changes in eating patterns (i.e., constant grazing, difficulty recognizing fullness)

This doesn't always mean something is wrong, but it does mean it's worth evaluating.

4 Common Misunderstandings

1

“Higher percentile = healthier”

A higher percentile doesn't mean better health; it just means a child is larger compared to others. Kids can be perfectly healthy at many different percentiles.

2

“They dropped percentiles so something is wrong”

A shift in percentiles isn't always a problem. Some children naturally adjust to a new curve as they grow. What matters most is the overall pattern over time, not a single change.

3

“They just need to eat more to catch up”

It's not always as simple as “eat more.” Growth depends on things like how consistently a child is eating, how well they're absorbing nutrients, and their natural growth pattern.

4

“BMI tells the whole story”

BMI is just one piece of information. It doesn't account for things like body composition, genetics, or how a child is growing over time, so it should never be used on its own.



How to Support Healthy Growth at Home

Whether growth seems slower, faster or right on track, the goal is usually not to control weight, but to support the conditions where growth can unfold well. Healthy growth is supported by the same foundations for all children.

Focus on these Growth Foundations

Provide Structure

Offer predictable meals and snacks throughout the day.

- Aim for regular opportunities to eat
- Include a balance of foods for energy, growth and satisfaction
- Limit grazing so hunger and fullness cues can work

Support Food Exposure

Kids are more likely to accept new foods when they're offered repeatedly, without pressure.

- Keep offering a variety of foods
- Include both familiar and new foods
- Remember acceptance often takes time

Keep Mealtimes Low Pressure

How children are fed matters as much as what they eat

- Avoid pressure, bribing, or “just take a few bites”
- Avoid restricting or tightly controlling food
- Support a calm, neutral mealtime environment

Trust Growth and Development

Growth is not linear:

- Appetite naturally fluctuates
- Kids grow in spurts
- Growth patterns matter more than single meals or measurements



A Helpful Model to Remember

Division of Responsibility

Parents decide:

- WHAT foods are offered
- WHEN meals and snacks happen
- WHERE eating takes place

Children decide:

- WHETHER to eat
- HOW MUCH to eat

This helps support both feeding skills and healthy growth over time.

Growth Changes with Age (And That's Normal)

Small changes are part of normal development:

- Appetite often slows after infancy
- Toddlers may eat unevenly from day to day
- School age growth tends to be steadier
- Puberty can bring major growth shifts

When to Reach Out for Extra Support

Consider additional support if:

- Growth is crossing percentiles unexpectedly
- Intake is very limited or meals feel stressful
- Feeding has become a struggle
- You feel unsure how to support growth at home

A pediatric dietitian can help!



LOOKING FOR MORE PEDIATRIC NUTRITION SUPPORT & GUIDANCE?

This guide is a great starting point for understanding your child's growth and feeding patterns, and for easing some of the confusion that can come with it.

But every child is different, and sometimes it helps to have individualized support, especially if you're feeling unsure, overwhelmed, or stuck trying to figure out what's going on.



DIETITIAN KAITLYN

Founder of Family Nutrition Solutions

At Family Nutrition Solutions, we take a functional, root cause approach to pediatric care, meaning we look beyond symptoms to understand what's driving your child's nutrition challenges, and create a plan that supports their overall health and development.

For younger children, we partner with parents to create practical, age-appropriate nutrition strategies that support growth and healthy eating habits. For teens, we can work directly with them to build independence, confidence, and a positive relationship with food.

If you're ready for a plan of action that fits your family's lifestyle and schedule...

You might be a great fit for FNS Nutrition Counseling! And, good news — we accept insurance, so your appointment could be 100% covered 😊

[Tap here to learn more about our pediatric services](#), and if you're ready to get started...

[Here's the link to request an appointment.](#)

I'm so glad to have you as part of my community, and I'm proud of you for making a commitment to your health goals.

- Dietitian Kaitlyn



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*Feel Confident Supporting Your Child's
Growth Every Step of the Way*



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S GROWTH CURVE

WHAT'S NORMAL VS WHEN TO PAY CLOSER ATTENTION

Not all growth patterns are created equal, and percentiles don't mean what most parents think they do. Growth charts are a tool, not a judgement of your child's health or your parenting. Bigger doesn't mean healthier, and smaller doesn't mean something is wrong – Patterns over time matter most!

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- weight
- height
- (sometimes BMI- for-age)

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Support Food Exposure

Children learn to eat through repeated, low pressure exposure

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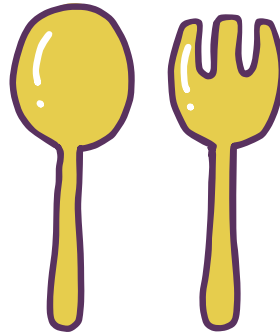
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