



Addressing Child Weight: Helping Without Harming

From the perspective of the [Satter Feeding Dynamics Model](http://tiny.cc/fdsatter) (<http://tiny.cc/fdsatter>), weight becomes problematic, not when it is above or below a statistical cutoff point, but when it diverges abnormally. To support and restore optimum growth, support parents in following a stage-appropriate Division of Responsibility in Feeding (DOR): Parents do the *what, when, where* of *feeding* and the child does the *how much* and *whether* of *eating*.

One Growth Point		
Child's growth	What To Do	Explain Growth to the Parents
Single point around the mean	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow.	"Your child is about average in size. We will follow to see if that continues."
Single point at a percentile considered "diagnosable," \leq 3rd to 5th; \geq 85th to 95th.	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow.	"Your child is smaller (larger) than most children her age. That is only a problem if you worry and try to get your small child to eat more or your big child to eat less. Our job is to help you feed in the best way."
Several Growth Points; Consistent Growth		
Consistent growth around the mean	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow.	"Your child is growing predictably and well."
Consistent growth at a percentile considered "diagnosable."	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow.	"Your child is growing predictably and well and that will probably continue. Don't try to get your large child to eat less to slim down or your small child to eat more to grow faster. It will backfire."
Several Growth Points; Inconsistent Growth		
Slow smooth shift up or down at any <i>growth percentile</i> ¹	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow.	"Growth often adjusts if a child was particularly small or large at first. Your child's size and shape could also be changing to be more like yours. Feeding in the best way will let him get the body that is right for him."
Abrupt shift up or down at any growth percentile	Teach DOR & solve feeding problems. Follow. ²	"It is unusual for a child's growth to shift abruptly. Let's look at how feeding is going. Feeding in the best way will help your child grow in a way that is right for her."

¹ Breastfed babies' weight may shift upward during the early months. Appropriate-for-gestational-age infants from multiple-birth pregnancies are also likely to be small at birth and grow rapidly in the early months.

² Attempting to intervene by manipulating amounts and types of food is likely to exacerbate growth distortion.