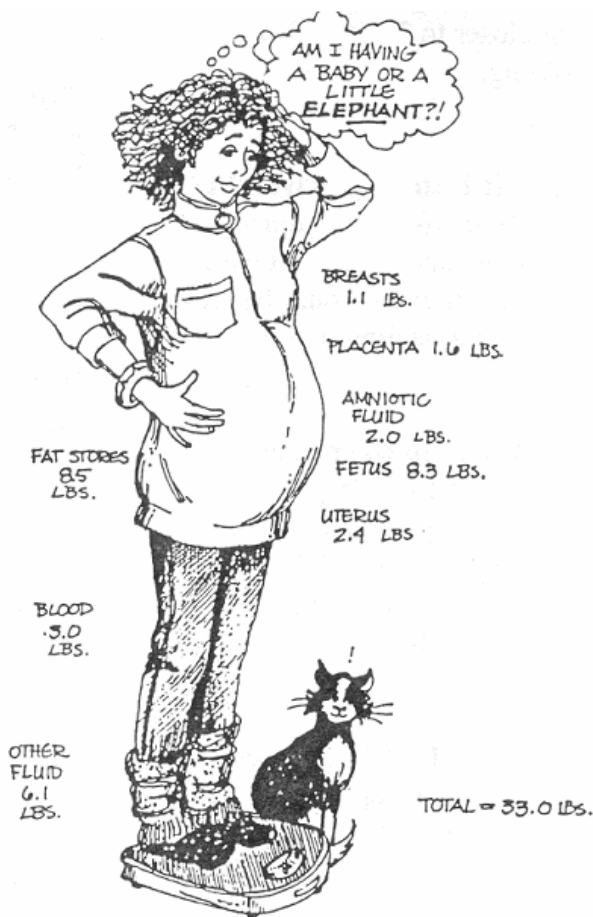


Healthy Weight Gain for Pregnancy

Expectant mothers usually want to gain enough weight so that their baby has a healthy birth weight, but aren't sure exactly how much weight that is, or even where it all goes. As you can see from the picture below, only part of the weight you put on during pregnancy is the baby. The rest of your weight gain helps the baby to grow. Women who don't gain enough weight during pregnancy may deliver a **low birth weight** baby, one who weighs less than five and a half pounds. These little babies are more likely to be sick at birth, and often have serious developmental problems.



How much a woman should gain depends on her size before she was pregnant. To decide on a weight gain that's right for *you*, you first need to know what your body mass index, or BMI, was before you were pregnant. Find your BMI using the chart on the back of this factsheet. Be sure to use your last known weight **before** pregnancy!

WEIGHT! THIS IS IMPORTANT!

A healthy weight gain is important for everyone, but especially for thin women and heavy women.

Women who start pregnancy thin, need to focus on putting on all of the recommended pounds. This is because women with a low pre-pregnancy BMI have a greater chance of delivering a low birth weight baby.

Gaining a lot more weight than recommended isn't good either, especially for women who start pregnancy heavier, and for women shorter than five feet two inches. High weight gain can lead to gestational diabetes, and very large babies who have problems at birth.

A healthy approach to eating can go a long way in helping you have a healthy baby. For most women, this simply means eating according to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, and having an active lifestyle. On the other hand, women who are very thin or very heavy should think about seeing a registered dietitian for more in-depth advice.

YOUNGER MOMS

Teens who had their first period at least two years before becoming pregnant can use the same BMI chart and weight gain goals shown on the back of this page. If it has been less than two years, she should try to gain the highest weight shown for her BMI zone.

TWINS & BEYOND!

Women carrying more than one baby are at higher risk of having low birth weight babies who are born more than three weeks *before* their due date. These women need to gain more than women carrying just one baby. Women with a healthy weight before pregnancy should gain 35 to 45 pounds in total. This works out to 12 pounds per week in their second and third trimesters.

FIND YOUR BMI!

Find your height and your weight (*before* your pregnancy) on the graph below. Draw lines from these points into the body of the graph. Your BMI is where these height and weight lines meet. Check below to see how much total weight you should gain. Keep in mind that 2-8 pounds of this total will be gained in the first trimester (or first three months) of pregnancy. Women of all sizes should have a slow and steady weight gain throughout their pregnancy.

BMI below 20

If your BMI is less than 20, you need to gain between 28 and 40 pounds, to lower your risk of having a low birth weight baby. This is a gain of about one pound per week after the first trimester.

BMI between 20 and 27 (shaded area)

Women in this category have the lowest risk of having either a low or high birth weight baby. Plan to gain between 25 and 35 pounds in all, or about 3/4 of a pound per week after the first trimester.

If your BMI is close to the 27 line, or if you are shorter than 5 foot 2 inches, aim for a 25 pound gain. On the other hand, if you are not short or your BMI is closer to the 20 end of the dotted zone, aim for 35 pounds.

BMI over 27

Women who were heavy when they became pregnant still need to gain weight in order for the baby to grow and develop properly. It is really important to make those calories count, by choosing low-fat nutritious foods. A registered dietitian can help you to do this. Also, stay as active as possible.

If your BMI is over 27, you need to gain at least 15 pounds in total. This works out to one pound gained every three weeks. **Don't diet!** This is not the time to lose weight.

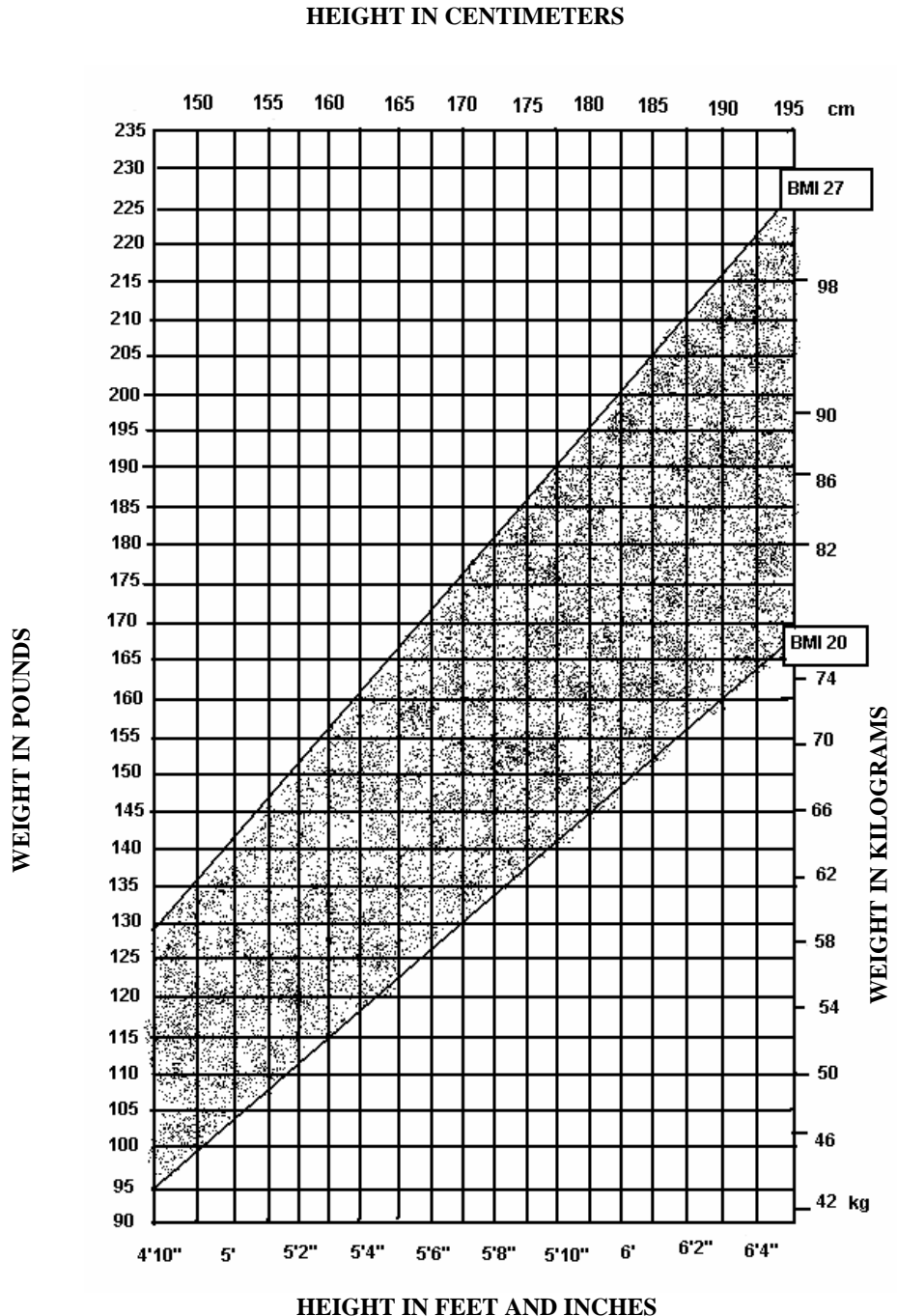


Chart adapted from material produced by Ottawa-Carleton Health Department



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