



To News Editor  
For Immediate Release

October 12, 1994

### Growth Standards for Hong Kong

A territory wide growth survey, covering 25,000 Chinese children from birth to 18 years, was performed in 1993 by the Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong in collaboration with the Department of Health and doctors of the Hospital Authority. Subjects include students studying in 49 schools and infants attending 8 maternal and child health clinics, all randomly chosen to represent Hong Kong.

This survey provides 1) Standards for weight, height and head circumference. 2) Standards for sexual maturation. 3) Standards for body proportion and sitting height. 4) Standards for obesity. 5) Prevalence of obesity at different ages. Findings of the survey have significant implication on education and medical services. With the new standards, the health care of children will be significantly improved.

Some of the important findings are:

- 1) Children of today are heavier, taller and have larger heads. Mean weight at 18 years has increased 16 % in boys and 11 % in girls, whereas mean height has increased 2 % in boys and 1 % in girls compared to figures obtained thirty years ago.
- 2) Compared to their parents of the same age, children appear much taller. In boys of 12 years of age, the average height difference can be 10 cm and in girls of 10, 7 cm. However, by 18 years, the difference would be just 4 cm in boys and 2 cm in girls. This is a result of earlier maturation of the present generation.
- 3) Ten percent of girls showed the first sign of puberty, breast development, at age 7.
- 4) Half of the girls at 12.5 years would have experienced their first menstruation. Mean age of menarche has fallen by half a year.
- 5) Childhood obesity was prevalent mainly after age 5. The highest prevalence in boys is 21 % at age 11 and in girls 12 % at age 10. Such high prevalence has never been a feature in the Chinese population and is approaching that of the west.
- 6) There is no significant difference in the prevalence of obesity or final height achieved among children of different social groups and different regions of Hong Kong.

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