

RESOURCE SHEET • MAY 2009

WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY: REEXAMINING THE GUIDELINES

Women having children today are substantially heavier than at any time in the past. Beginning pregnancy in the normal weight body mass index (BMI, a measure of body fat based on weight and height), as recommended in this report, requires the efforts of both a pregnant woman and her health care providers. The new guidelines for weight gain, shown in Table 1, are formulated as a range for each category of prepregnancy BMI. These new guidelines are based on observational data, which consistently show that women who gained within the IOM (1990) guidelines experienced better outcomes of pregnancy than those who did not.

To help achieve the recommended weight gain ranges, women should consult their care providers about diet and physical activity before, during, and after pregnancy. To assist care providers, the committee provides Figures 1 and 2, which could be developed for use as a basis for discussion with pregnant women. These charts illustrate differences between weight gain ranges for obese and normal weight women and should be considered models rather than final products.

TABLE 1: NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOTAL AND RATE OF WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY, BY PREPREGNANCY BMI

Prepregnancy BMI	BMI ⁺ (kg/m ²)	Total Weight Gain (lbs)	Rates of Weight Gain* 2nd and 3rd Trimester (lbs/week)
Underweight	<18.5	28–40	1 (1–1.3)
Normal weight	18.5–24.9	25–35	1 (0.8–1)
Overweight	25.0–29.9	15–25	0.6 (0.5–0.7)
Obese (includes all classes)	≥30.0	11–20	0.5 (0.4–0.6)

+ To calculate BMI go to www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/

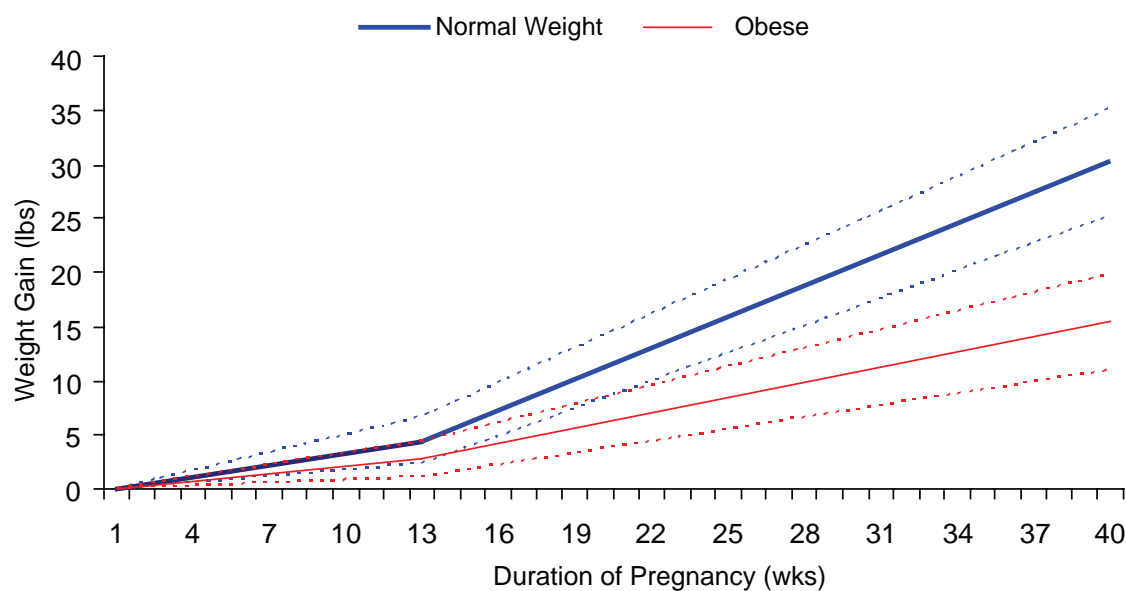
* Calculations assume a 0.5–2 kg (1.1–4.4 lbs) weight gain in the first trimester (based on Siega-Riz et al., 1994; Abrams et al., 1995; Carmichael et al., 1997)



INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

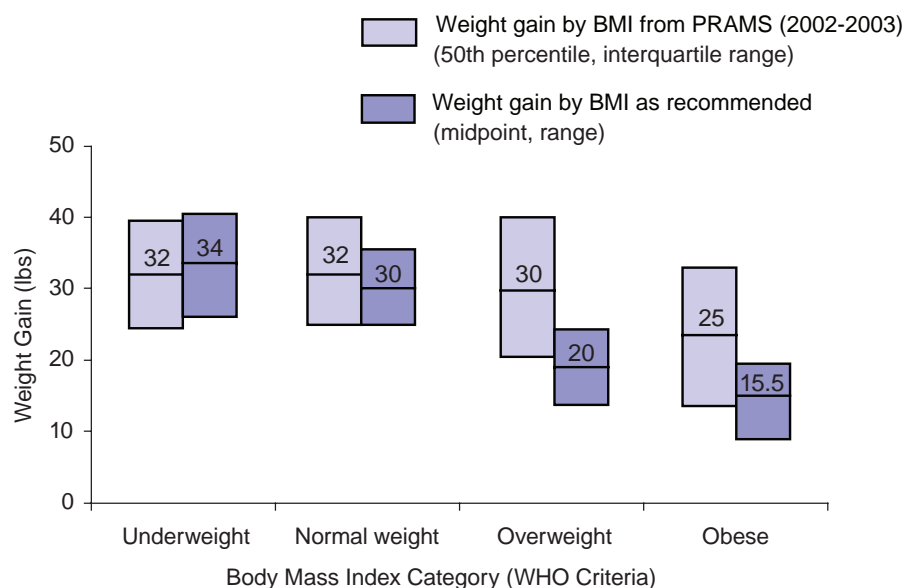
Advising the Nation. Improving Health.

FIGURE 1: WEIGHT GAIN COMPARISON BETWEEN NORMAL WEIGHT AND OBESE BMI CATEGORIES



The difference between the median (solid lines) and range (dotted lines) of recommended weight gain for pregnant women within normal weight (BMI 18.5-24.9 kg/m²) and obese (BMI > 30.0 kg/m²) categories is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 2: CURRENT TRENDS IN WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY COMPARED TO THE RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES



Comparison of weight gain by BMI category between data reported in the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2002-2003, and weight gain as recommended in the new guidelines. The number in the center represents the midpoint, and the boxes represent the ranges in weight gain for each body mass index (BMI) category.