



IUNS International Union of Nutrition Sciences

Statement of Endorsement of the WHO Child Growth Standards

The International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) congratulates the WHO on the release of the Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS) scheduled for April 27, 2006. These child growth standards based on the best available methodology included longitudinal and cross sectional data from over 8000 infants and young children from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. We welcome the prescriptive approach used by the MGRS. The growth standards will now reflect current WHO recommended practices for infant feeding; including breast feeding for 6 months complemented with appropriate foods past this age. We recognize that the MGRS selected mothers and environments that were not restrictive of growth and development of children, thus mothers were adequately nourished and children were free from tobacco exposure in the womb or during breast milk feeding. The new WHO child growth standards are truly international; they clearly demonstrate that children independent of race or ethnicity can grow equally well. Thus, these growth standards should be applied to children everywhere. The data also suggest that the model of evaluating growth used to date may have promoted excess weight gain in the early years, potentially contributing to the present epidemic of obesity and related chronic disease. The MGRS provides effective tools to detect both under nutrition and obesity, thus addressing the double burden of malnutrition affecting the globe. They will provide nutritionists, health practitioners, and families with an important means to follow the growth and development of children and to assess problems which may require attention. They firmly support breast feeding as the optimal food for young children for the first 6 month of life, that mothers should avoid tobacco and consume a healthy diet, and that the control of excess weight should start early on in life.

Professor Ricardo Uauy, President of the IUNS, said “The WHO child growth standards are the only truly global reference to assess children from birth to 5 years of age. They will serve to sharpen our focus on optimal nutrition in the first years of life, securing linear growth while maintaining a healthy weight; this should contribute in preventing the consequences of malnutrition in all its forms with a life course perspective”. Professor Osman Galal, Secretary General, of the IUNS added “We encourage all our IUNS adhering bodies, national Nutrition Societies and regional Adhering Bodies throughout the world, as well as governments everywhere, to adopt and use the WHO child growth standards to promote optimal growth and better health for all children in this world”. The IUNS will promote the new WHO growth standards at its regional and international meetings which will include sessions about the MGRS and its implementation at country and regional levels. IUNS offices are in Santiago, Chile and in Los Angeles, USA.

IUNS International Union of Nutrition Sciences (www.iuns.org)
“The only truly global community for Nutrition Sciences”

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