















BMJ Open Growth patterns in childhood and adolescence and adult body composition: a pooled analysis of birth cohort studies from five low and middle-income countries (COHORTS collaboration)

Natalia E Poveda ¹, Linda S Adair ², Reynaldo Martorell ¹, Shivani A Patel ¹, Manuel Ramirez-Zea ³, Santosh K Bhargava⁴, Sonny A Bechayda ⁵, Delia B Carba⁵, Maria F Kroker-Lobos³, Bernardo Lessa Horta ⁶, Natália Peixoto Lima⁶, Mónica Mazariegos ³, Ana Maria Baptista Menezes ⁶, Shane A Norris ⁷, Lukhanyo H Nyati⁴, Linda M Richter ⁸, Harshpal Sachdev ⁹, Fernando C Wehmeister ⁶, Aryeh D Stein ¹

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For numbered affiliations see end of article.

Correspondence to
Dr Aryeh D Stein;
aryeh.stein@emory.edu

ABSTRACT

Objective We examined associations among serial measures of linear growth and relative weight with adult body composition.

Design Secondary data analysis of prospective birth cohort studies.

Settings Six birth cohorts from Brazil, Guatemala, India, the Philippines and South Africa.

Participants 4173 individuals followed from birth to ages 22–46 years with complete and valid weight and height at birth, infancy, childhood and adolescence, and body composition in adult life.

Exposures Birth weight and conditional size (standardised residuals of height representing linear growth and of relative weight representing weight increments independent of linear size) in infancy, childhood and adolescence.

Primary outcome measures Body mass index, fat mass index (FMI), fat-free mass index (FFMI), fat mass/fat-free mass ratio (FM/FFM), and waist circumference in young and mid-adulthood.

Results In pooled analyses, a higher birth weight and relative weight gains in infancy, childhood and adolescence were positively associated with all adult outcomes. Relative weight gains in childhood and adolescence were the strongest predictors of adult body composition (β (95% CI) among men: FMI (childhood: 0.41 (0.26 to 0.55); adolescence: 0.39 (0.27 to 0.50)), FFMI (childhood: 0.50 (0.34 to 0.66); adolescence: 0.43 (0.32 to 0.55)), FM/FFM (childhood: 0.31 (0.16 to 0.47); adolescence: 0.31 (0.19 to 0.43)). Among women, similar patterns were observed, but, effect sizes in adolescence were slightly stronger than in childhood. Conditional height in infancy was positively associated with FMI (men: 0.08 (0.03 to 0.14); women: 0.11 (0.07 to 0.16)). Conditional height in childhood

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- We analysed six well-characterised population-based prospective birth cohorts from five low and middle-income countries.
- We considered a two-compartment model of body composition (fat mass index and fat-free mass index), that were measured with gold standards and/or validated techniques at each study site.
- The use of conditional growth measures allowed us to break the high correlations among serial measures of weight and height to study the independent roles of linear growth and relative weight at specific age intervals.
- Attrition might be one source of selection bias given the long-lasting follow-up of these birth cohorts.
- Residual confounding by unmeasured characteristics such as diet, reproductive history and other lifestyle factors might bias the estimates.

was positively but weakly associated with women's adiposity. Site-specific and sex-stratified analyses showed consistency in the direction of estimates, although there were differences in their magnitude.

Conclusions Prenatal and postnatal relative weight gains were positive predictors of larger body size and increased adiposity in adulthood. A faster linear growth in infancy was a significant but weak predictor of higher adult adiposity.

INTRODUCTION

Low and middle-income countries (LMICs) have witnessed an increase in the prevalence of cardiometabolic risk factors such

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