

**Anthropometry** is the measurement of an individual's weight and height and is used to assess nutritional status.

Anthropometric measurements are compared with the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics/World Health Organization (NCHS/WHO) international reference standards and presented as indices.

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Three indices in children are commonly used to describe malnutrition:

1. **Weight for Age (WA): Underweight** reflects both chronic and acute malnutrition.

*Prevalence of underweight is a Millennium Development Goal Indicator. For more information on the Millennium Development Goals, visit [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/).*

2. **Height for Age (HA): Stunting** reflects chronic malnutrition.

3. **Weight for Height (WH): Wasting** reflects acute malnutrition.

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These measures are commonly expressed as two variables:

- **Z-score**
- **% of median**

These variables are commonly presented in two indicator forms:

- **Prevalence**  
[% below a cut-off;  
usual cut-off is <-2 Z-score]
- **mean values**

FOOD AND  
NUTRITION  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE

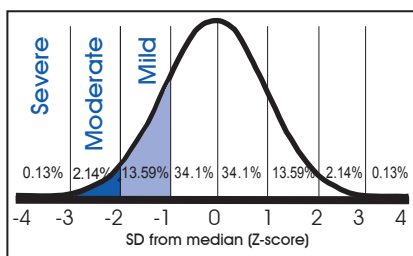


**Z-score:** [in standard deviation units (SD)] refers to how far and in what direction the anthropometric measurement deviates from the reference median (mean).

#### Malnutrition Classifications

	Z-score (SD)	% median
Mild	-2 to <-1	80 to <90
Moderate	-3 to <-2	70 to <80
Severe	<-3	<70

#### International Reference Standard Distribution



#### Other Common Measures

**Body Mass Index (BMI = kg/m<sup>2</sup>):**  
used to assess adult nutritional status.

**Chronic Energy Deficiency (CED):**  
% of adults with BMI < 18.5.

**Undernourished:** % of population whose food intake (daily per capita energy availability) falls below minimum requirement. Derived from FAO modeling and Food Balance Sheets. *A Millennium Development Goal Indicator.*

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