

Low Birth Weight and Very Low Birth Weight

**Definition/
cut-off value**

Low Birth Weight (LBW)

Birth weight defined as less than or equal to 5 pounds 8 ounces (less than or equal to 2500 g), for infants and children less than 24 months old.

Very Low Birth Weight (VLBW)

Birth weight defined as less than or equal to 3 pounds 5 ounces (less than or equal to 1500 g), for infants and children less than 24 months old.

Note: See “Guidelines for Growth Charts and Gestational Age Adjustment for Low Birth Weight and Very Low Birth Weight Infants” (FNS Policy Memorandum 98-9, Revision 7, April 2004) for more information about the anthropometric assessment and nutritional care of LBW and VLBW infants.

**Participant
category and
priority level**

Category

Priority

Infants

I

Children less than 24
months old

III

Justification

Low birth weight is one of the most important biologic predictors of infant death and deficiencies in physical and mental development during childhood among those babies who survive and continues to be a strong predictor of growth in early childhood. Infants and children born with LBW/VLBW, particularly if caused by fetal growth restriction, need an optimal nutrient intake to survive, meet the needs of an extended period of relatively rapid postnatal growth, and complete their growth and development. (1)

References

Cited Reference

1. Institute of Medicine. WIC nutrition risk criteria a scientific assessment. Washington (DC): National Academy Press; 1996. p. 97.

Additional Reference

1. Anderson DM. Nutritional implications of premature birth, birth weight, and gestational age classification. In: Groh-Wargo S, Thompson M, Cox J, editors. Nutritional care for high-risk newborns. Rev. 3rd ed. Chicago: Precept Press, Inc.; 2000.
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