
Letters to the Editor

A Cheap Alternative to a Stadiometer and an Infantometer

I read with interest the recent communication on this subject (1) and in fact have been using -this method with some modifications for full use. An ordinary inch tape is 152 cm long. I use two inch tapes. One is cut off at 150 cm mark and is joined to the second tape at 50 cm mark, which has been cut off at 86 cm mark and pasted on the wall. After the height of 150 cm I add 100 cm, for example, if a child is 163 cm tall, his height will be at the level of 63 cm mark on the second tape. So for measuring the height of the children eleven years onwards who may be above 152 cm in height, two inch tapes are required and not one as

stated by the author. I can measure the height accurately upto 186 cm.

Similarly for infants, I have an 'L' shaped wooden appliance, which is 6 cm wide, the head rest is 20 cm long and the 'long arm' to measure the length of the infant is 85 cm long. Ordinary inch tape, cut at 85 cm mark is pasted on the long arm. This way it has become an inexpensive Infantometer to measure the infants upto 85 cm length.

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REFERENCE

1. Passi GR. A cheap alternative to stadiometer. *Indian Pediatr* 1997; 34: 652-653.

A Cheap Alternative to a Stadiometer?

Dr. Passi (1) has suggested a cheap alternative to a stadiometer. The problem she points out: difficulty in accurate measurement of height: is a genuine one, since hardly anyone has a proper instrument. Unfortunately, while her solution is simple and cheap, it is certainly not accurate. Accurate measurement of height needs: (i) a vertical stand with *precise* height markings on it, (ii) a sliding but *rigid, right angle device* to rest on the head, and (iii) proper posi-

tioning of the child(2). As far as (i) is concerned, inexpensive plastic tapes are not precise, and can stretch while being fixed, or over time. Moreover, using anything lying around in the clinic (stiff paper, ruler, *etc.*) cannot substitute for a rigid head-board. Mistakes of 1-5 cm can be easily made, with disastrous results, particularly if growth velocity is being assessed.

A Harpenden stadiometer is the gold standard, but is certainly very expensive. An inexpensive stadiometer can be fabricated by mounting 2 meter sticks in vertical tandem on any vertical surface at least 12 inches apart, and providing a sliding, rigid