

Title:

Is my child too short? Answering your questions about your child's height

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Abstract:

Children who are much shorter than others of the same gender and age, whose growth has slowed down, or those who are not on track to match the height of others in their family should see a specialist for evaluation of a growth disorder.

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Is My Child too Short?

Answering your questions about your child's height

What determines my child's height?

Your child's height is influenced by many factors. Here are some of the things that determine how tall your child is:

Diet



Making sure your child eats a healthy diet is one way to make sure he or she is growing well. Kids need lots of fruits and vegetables, dairy products, proteins like meat and beans, and grains like bread and rice. If your child isn't eating enough or isn't eating the right things, he or she could have trouble growing the way he or she should.

Genetics



Your child's genes also play a role in his or her height. You may say that your child has his grandmother's eyes her uncle's laugh, but he also has genes from his family that influence his size. If many people in your family are short, your child may be short as well. On the other hand, if most of your family is tall, your child has a good chance of growing to be a tall adult.

Illness

Sometimes, a health condition can make a child grow too fast or too slow. There are many conditions that can cause a child to be short, even if the family is tall and she is eating all the right foods.

- Problems with the digestive tract can make it hard for your child to absorb the nutrients from food that he or she needs to grow
- Hormone problems can cause a child to grow too slowly.
- If your child is frequently ill, his or her body may be too busy fighting the illness to focus on growing

Many of these health conditions can be treated to get your child back on track so he or she can grow up strong and healthy.

How can I tell if my child is too short?

It can be hard to tell if your child's short height is something to worry about.

Make sure your child has regular checkups with a doctor. The doctor will monitor your child's growth to make sure his or her height is on track compared with other children of the same age and gender.



Be sure to tell your child's doctor if you feel there is a problem with his or her growth. For example, if your child is much shorter than his or her siblings, or if you notice his or her growth has suddenly slowed down. Parents are often the first to notice problems with their children's health.

Your doctor may ask you questions to determine if your child has any symptoms of a medical condition leading to short stature. He may also want to know about conditions that run in your family and heights of other family members.



What will my doctor do if there is a problem with my child's growth?

Based on your child's growth pattern, your doctor can get a better idea of whether your child's height is something to worry about, or simply to monitor closely.

Your doctor may order some blood tests to look for hormone problems, digestive problems or evidence of other problems that could cause your child to be short.

Some children may need to see a specialist for more testing and treatments to help them grow to their full potential. Your doctor can decide if your child should see a specialist.

The Bottom Line

Most short children do not have a medical problem causing them to be short. These children are probably short because others in their family are short.

Others are short because of a problem with their diet or overall health.

Much of the time, growth problems can be treated so that your child will grow up strong and healthy!



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