

Short Stature

Short stature means that a person is significantly shorter than average compared with others the same age. About 2.3% of people in the United States have short stature.

What Causes Short Stature?

Short stature can have several causes. These include

- Family history of short stature
 - Poor diet
 - Certain chronic diseases. These include heart disease at birth and some diseases of the kidney and bowels
 - Disorders of the bones or skeleton
 - Low levels of thyroid hormones or growth hormone
 - Poor growth of a baby in the womb
- Sometimes no cause is found.

How Is Short Stature Assessed?

If you are concerned that your child is growing too slowly, you should tell a doctor. The doctor will examine your child and review your child's birth history. The doctor will also

- Ask about medical problems and delays in development
- Ask about poor school performance
- Review your child's diet
- Review the medications your child takes (some medications may affect growth)
- Ask if anyone in your family has had growth problems or delayed puberty
- Order laboratory or x-ray studies if needed

When Should Short Stature Be Treated?

Slow growth may not be a cause for worry. But the doctor might suggest treatment with growth hormone if your child

- Is growing poorly, with no cause found
- Has no other diseases
- Is very short
- Is expected to be very short as an adult
- Is expected to respond well to treatment

Treatment will begin only after you and your child have thoroughly discussed the treatment with the doctor. Children treated with growth hormone grow an average of 2 inches from what was expected. But this happens only after many years of treatment. If your child is treated, his or her growth response will be measured after 6 to 12 months. This will help the doctor decide if treatment should continue. Complications might also happen. Rare complications

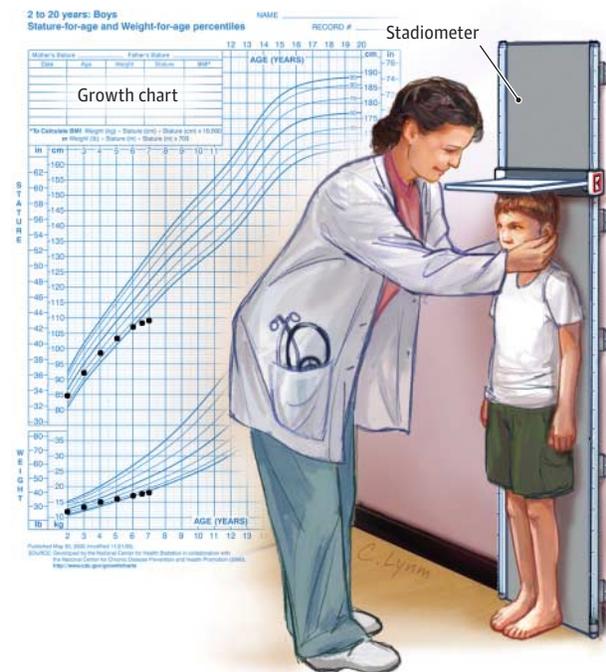
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Assessment of growth pattern and height measurement



include increased pressure inside the skull. Or, the top part of the thigh bone might slip out of place. It is not known what other complications might happen over time. If complications happen, treatment might be stopped, temporarily or permanently.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Human Growth Foundation
<http://www.hgfound.org/>

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