Short Stature

Short stature is the medical term for when a child's height is much below average for age, sex, race or family.

CAUSES

Short stature is often not a sign or symptom of a medical problem. Causes of short stature fall into one of several types:

- Constitutional delay of growth and maturation. – a slow growth pattern that often runs in the family. There is usually a delay in growth during puberty. There is also a delay in puberty. However, these children often keep growing after their peers stop growing. Normal height is reached.
- Familial short stature. In this situation, children have short parents. They grow at a normal rate and reach puberty at a normal age. They become short adults with heights that reflect that of their parents.
- Idiopathic short stature (ISS). Idiopathic means we don't know the cause. These children become short adults.
- Chronic disease – several diseases can cause short stature. There are usually other symptoms and physical signs.

Testing may be needed to find the cause. Tests done may include:

- A Bone age x-ray that tells us how your child's bones are maturing.
- Blood tests to check:
  - How well your child's organs are working.
  - For anemia.
  - Hormone levels.
  - Genetic issues, etc.
- Urine tests to look for infection and clues to how well the kidneys are working.
- Repeat measurements of height and weight.

TREATMENT

Treatment for short stature depends on the cause.

- Growth hormone (a hormone produced by the pituitary gland that is now available as a medicine) is appropriate for some cases of short stature. Your child's caregiver can discuss this with you.
- Counseling can help if your child is teased about being short. Teasing can make a child feel ashamed.
- In constitutional short stature, sometimes sex hormones are given to bring about changes that happen during puberty. This is only considered if the child is very upset emotionally by a lack of physical development. Sex hormones can speed up growth in height as well. They have no effect on the ultimate adult height.
- If short stature is due to a disease, treatment (if available) of the disease may improve a child's growth.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Offer your child a well balanced diet.
- Keep the follow-up appointments with your child's caregiver.
- Be understanding and listen carefully to your child's concerns about being short.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF YOUR CHILD:

- Has weight loss.
- Has a loss of hunger (*appetite*).
- Avoids school or social situations because of being short.
- Has new, unexplained symptoms.

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