Constitutional Growth Delay

Constitutional growth delay (CGD) is a normal growth pattern for some children. It leads to slow growth and delayed puberty (the time when children's bodies begin to mature sexually). CGD becomes noticeable when your child's peers are in their time of rapid growth and sexual development.

CAUSES

The cause of CGD is not known. It often occurs in children who have one or both parents who were also slow to develop.

SYMPTOMS

Children with CGD tend to be a bit short in early childhood, but they grow at a normal rate. They do not have the rapid growth spurt of adolescence when other children their age do. They continue to grow but at a slow rate. They also do not show signs of puberty until later. They eventually do reach a normal height and normal sexual maturity. They may not finish growing until the late teens.

Children may feel embarrassed about their small size compared to their friends. They may be self-conscious because of their lack of sexual maturity. Some children refuse to participate in gym class or shower with other children.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of CGD is made by a physical exam and history. Blood tests may be done. X-rays to tell a child's maturity may be done.

TREATMENT

No medical treatment is needed. It is important to reassure your child that normal growth and sexual development will happen with time.

CHILDREN OF THIS AGE CAN BE VERY SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT THEIR BODIES. LOOKING DIFFERENT THAN OTHERS MAY CAUSE A LOT OF DISTRESS. LISTEN PATIENTLY TO YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. IF YOUR CHILD IS ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE ABOUT SMALL SIZE AND LACK OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT, YOUR CAREGIVER MAY RECOMMEND A MEDICINE THAT WILL SPEED UP THE ENTRANCE INTO PUBERTY.

HOMECARE INSTRUCTIONS

Avoid teasing your child about size or lack of sexual development. Let your child know if you or other adults in the family had a similar growth pattern. Adolescents doing weight training should use lower weights to avoid stress on growing bones.

Follow up with your caregiver regularly to check the height, weight, and stage of sexual development.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child is very upset about being short or sexually immature.
- Your child is avoiding school or other activities because of embarrassment.

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