

Children's Health

Discuss Slow Growth With Your Doctor

(NAPSA)—A child's normal growth is one of the key indicators of good health. Often, when a child doesn't grow at the same pace as his or her peers, parents just assume the child is a late bloomer, says Deborah Bowlby, M.D., a pediatric endocrinologist and expert in children's growth at the Medical



Dr. Bowlby

University of South Carolina. But for some children, a slow growth rate is a sign of a growth disorder. Dr. Bowlby answers a few commonly asked questions about the problem.

Q: Why is it important to monitor a child's growth?

A: In general, healthy children grow. Your child's doctor should measure and plot both height and weight on a growth curve at every visit.

Q: What are some reasons a child may not be growing?

A: Children can have poor growth if they are not getting enough food or are unable to absorb nutrients from their food, as is the case with celiac disease. Children with chronic medical issues such as cystic fibrosis can also have poor growth. Some children have problems with their bones or have genetic conditions that cause them to be short. Hormone deficiencies can also cause poor growth.

Q: How are growth disorders diagnosed?

A: A pediatric endocrinologist should evaluate the child's growth pattern in the context of his or her family and stage of pubertal development. If a child is short and not growing well, baseline blood tests and a bone age X-ray (X-ray of left hand and wrist) may be ordered to



Growth is a marker of good health.

assess the child's potential for growth. In some cases, genetic tests may also be requested. If a hormone deficiency is suspected, a "stimulation" blood test may be scheduled to assess hormone levels.

Q: How are growth disorders treated?

A: Growth disorders are treated by treating the underlying condition. If a child has a nutritional issue, he or she may need to see a nutritionist or a gastroenterologist. When there is an underlying medical condition, the child may be referred to a pediatric subspecialist. If the child has a hormone deficiency, we replace the hormone that is missing.

Q: What advice would you give to parents who think their child may have a growth disorder?

A: If you think your child has a growth disorder, ask the pediatrician's office to plot his or her height and weight on a growth curve. Talk with the pediatrician about your child's overall health and whether he or she needs to be referred to a pediatric endocrinologist.

To learn more about growth disorders, you can visit the Web site of the Major Aspects of Growth In Children (MAGIC) Foundation at www.magicfoundation.org.