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FACT

Myths about children's growth

"Your grandad's sister was short, that's who she's taking after."

The height of a child's parents is most relevant, not any aunts, uncles, grandparents or other distant relatives.

"Don't worry, he'll have a growth spurt and catch up."

Whilst it's true children do have growth spurts at certain points throughout childhood, waiting for catch up growth can lead to valuable time lost.

"Don't worry, he was a tiny baby, he's always going to be small."

For various reasons, a baby might be born smaller than expected, this is sometimes called small for gestational age (SGA). Most babies born small for gestational age have catch up growth. But, 10% of SGA children do not. Under these circumstances treatment is available and effective.

"She's a girl. It's good for girls to be petite."

Short stature is mistakenly considered less of a problem for women. Girls are less frequently referred to specialists compared to boys, yet often have more severe growth failure and higher rates of a medical cause for short stature.

"Feed them more, they'll grow."

Whilst a healthy balanced diet is incredibly important throughout childhood, nutritional influences become less influential after the age of 2-3 years. Hormones, particularly thyroid and growth hormone become the main regulating mechanisms for this period of childhood growth.

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Charity registered in England & Wales |
Charity number: 1172807 | Company number: CE010204

