

Constitutional Delay of Growth and Puberty

What is constitutional delay of growth and puberty?

Constitutional delay refers to a variation of the tempo of the growth process rather than a disorder of growth. The child experiences normal growth and maturation, but at a slower than average pace. Such children are often the smallest in their school class. The physical changes of puberty and the pubertal growth spurt occur later in these children with constitutional delay. They are often referred to as "**late bloomers**".

What causes constitutional delay?

The cause is unknown. In many cases there may be a history of a similar growth pattern in one or more family members. It occurs more frequently in males than in females.

What are the possible effects of constitutional delay?

Being short and delayed in sexual maturation may cause some **emotional stress** for the child. Late development and short stature can cause anxiety for both males and females at a time when coping with the social pressure of adolescence is already a source of stress. They may experience teasing, which can be traumatic for some or may be passed over for selection on sports teams, etc... It is important to talk to your child about how he/she is feeling and encourage him/her to discuss any concerns or worries they may be having.

How is constitutional delay diagnosed?

Initially, the doctor will complete a thorough **physical exam** and will ask many questions. He/she will review the growth chart to determine your child's rate of growth. An **X-ray** of the left hand and wrist will often be performed to determine the child's bone age, which shows the growth plate development, which is a measure of his/her biological maturity. In selected cases, some **blood tests** may be performed to seek other causes of the short stature and pubertal delay, such as infections, poor nutrition, Celiac disease, kidney disease, congenital condition, and **growth hormone deficiency**. Growth hormone stimulation tests may be necessary - in some cases - to confirm or exclude the diagnosis of growth hormone deficiency. It is important to differentiate the diagnoses, because the causes and treatment are different.

What is the treatment for constitutional delay?

Because constitutional delay is a variation of the growth process, your child will eventually enter puberty, followed by a growth spurt. To "jump start" this process, monthly **testosterone injections** may be given to boys over 6 to 12 months. These injections can be given at our office or through your primary care physician. The growth and development in the child will be carefully monitored at our office.

When should the doctor see my child?

If testosterone injections are given, you will meet with the doctor every 3 months, and the nurse will give the shot every month. Remember to continue to see your primary care physician for routine medical care.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please call us at (303)783-3883.