**Is your Child Growing Normally?**

**Source: Deepa Kannan, Children’s Growth Blogger, Parenting Content Writer, Lifestyle, Times of India**

Some parents are cautious of everything in their child’s life. Some parents trust their Paediatrician blindly. Some parents go by the words of other parents or the elders at home. When it comes to whether your child is growing normally, do you as a parent follow your Paediatrician, the elders in your home or do you do your own research? Why is understanding what is normal growth in your child necessary? Growth is an important indicator of your child’s health. It’s not just aesthetic. It’s all about their health, their energy and their creativity! Slow growth can sometimes be nothing serious, and yet at times they can indicate serious growth disorders. If your instinct has been on high alert regarding how your child is growing, take a moment to listen.

Multiple times, parents have assumed that their child’s short stature is due to someone in the family being short. This might very well be the case, but it’s very important that you are aware of some of the growth parameters of a child and understand when you might need to listen to your inner voice and dig a little deeper. After all, you definitely do not want to lose precious time in the rare situation that there is a deeper reason behind your child’s slow growth. Children fail to grow for a variety of reasons. Hormones, genetics, sleep, nutrition, general health and exercise are all factors for normal growth. Optimum growth is more than just aesthetics. It’s all about your child’s health! If you suspect your child is not growing normally, listen to your inner voice!

Improper growth due to serious conditions can impact your child’s bone health, heart, eyesight, hearing, kidneys, immune system, respiratory system and learning! Your child should grow about 7-10 inches during the first year. During the second year growth slows to an average of 5 inches /year. During the third year growth averages 3 inches/year. From age 4 years until puberty, growth should be at least 2 inches per year.

Ignoring your inner voice of caution when you see your child growing slowly, when you see your child wearing out their clothes rather than outgrowing them, when you see your child much shorter than their peers, when your child is mistaken for being much younger or when you see your child much shorter than you or your other children at the same age, can cost you precious time. If you find yourself concerned about your child’s growth, don’t allow anyone except an expert to calm your fears. Ignoring or being in denial can make you lose time that is hugely precious in your child’s life.

**Parents who ignore this inner voice of concern, assuming that it is due to genetics, can delay making important changes that help their child’s normal growth.**

Remember, that your child has to live with the results of how much they’ve grown in these crucial years, for the rest of their life! Firstly, observe the Growth chart that is in your child’s file. Ask your Paediatrician questions if you have any concerns. If you do find that your child is not growing enough at any point in time, look at other factors. Genetics is part of this picture.

On average, a child’s potential adult height ranges between the average of the parents heights toward that of the parent who is the same sex as the child. But do not assume this and ignore everything else. This is only a basis.

Secondly, poor nutrition can impact your child’s growth. Ignoring symptoms like constipation, bloating and gas, can lead to your child not absorbing nutrients from food. If your culture eats a restrictive diet of any kind, make the effort to eat as healthy as possible so that you cover all that is necessary for proper nutrition.

Thirdly, certain illness which is chronic, or medication taken long term, can impact growth. If your child requires medication for a chronic condition, do our research and express your concerns to your child’s Paediatrician regarding side effects.

If a child lives in a home where there is unhappiness of any kind, it can impact growth as well. Just as stress impacts all of us, stress impacts your child as well, especially in growth. A child without stress will be able to grow more normally.

Finally, if your child does not have any of the above concerns, and is still not growing enough, share your concerns constantly with your child’s Paediatrician. Your child may need to see a Paediatric Endocrinologist, who can then diagnose if there is a deeper root cause as to why your child is not growing properly. This can be anything from hormone imbalance to a more serious growth disorder. I do know parents who ignore their inner voice, simply because they do not want to face something more serious.

This makes them lose precious time. If your child does have an underlying reason why growth is slow, don’t be alarmed. You can do so much once you know why. But do find out why. Remember, your child has to live with how much they’ve grown for the rest of their life!