

## Paediatric Department

# Delayed puberty

## What is delayed puberty?

Puberty is when a child's body begins to develop and change as they become an adult. It normally starts from 8 years in girls and 9 years in boys. Puberty is the result of hormone changes. However, this natural process might be delayed for different reasons.

Late or delayed puberty is defined as the lack of any signs of puberty by the age of 13 years in girls and 14 years in boys. It affects approximately 2% of adolescents and is more common in boys.

You might also be worried about your child's slow growth compared to his/her peers rather than slow pubertal development.

This leaflet gives you information about the causes of late puberty and when you should seek help.

## What are the first signs my child is entering puberty

In girls, you might see breast enlargement, pubic or underarm hair. Periods usually start after these changes have taken place

In both boys and girls, there will be a time of rapid growth or "growth spurt". Teenagers may also experience changes in emotions and 'mood swings' as they go through puberty

## What can cause late puberty?

Sometimes, entering puberty late runs in the family (genetic). However, it may also be caused by a long term illness, or very occasionally by a delay in hormones caused by a problem with the body making or recognising the hormones associated with puberty. Sometimes, this is a problem you are born with (genetic) or something you develop at a later stage

## When should I seek medical help?

### Please seek advice from your GP if:

- ➔ Your son is 14 years old and has none of the signs of puberty described above.
- ➔ Your daughter is 13 years old and has none of the signs of puberty described above.
- ➔ Your son or daughter has started puberty and it does not progress, or stops abruptly.
- ➔ Signs of puberty appear in an unusual order, for example, starting periods before breasts start to develop.

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## What will happen after that?

Your GP may refer you to a specialist if they think there could be an underlying cause of delayed puberty that needs to be investigated. This is usually to a general Paediatrician or a Paediatrician with a special knowledge of hormone problems (Endocrinologist).

## What happens at the Paediatric clinic?

### Physical examination

One of the most important parts of the assessment will be the examination. The doctor will measure your child's height and weight and carry out a thorough examination to ensure your child has no signs of any underlying health problems. They will also need to examine your child for signs of puberty including checking for breast tissue in girls and measuring testicular size in boys.

If your child feels that they would be more comfortable with a doctor of the same sex carrying out this examination then please phone our Paediatric administration team before your child's appointment. You are welcome to also request a chaperone at the appointment if you wish.

### Tests

Tests that may be carried out include

- a blood test to check hormone levels and for any signs of any other medical problems
- a hand X-ray to help determine your child's further potential to grow and predict their likely adult height
- Occasionally, an ultrasound or a different imaging test will be organised to check for problems with glands or organs

## Treatment

Treatment with medication is usually recommended if the lack of development is causing problems, such as significant distress and will only be prescribed by a specialist children's hospital after a period of observation and follow up.

## Trusted sources of further information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-or-delayed-puberty/>

## How to contact us

**Paediatric administration team)**

**020 8934 6403 (Monday-Friday 9-5pm)**



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