

PATIENT EDUCATION

Failure to Thrive, Pediatric

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Failure to thrive is when your child is not growing or developing as expected for his or her age. This includes mental, physical, and emotional growth. It usually is noticed from infancy to the age of five.

CAUSES

There are many possible causes for failure to thrive:

- Being born early (*prematurely*).
- Infection.
- Newborn illnesses.
- Endocrine gland disorders.
- Chromosome and genetic disorders.
- Allergies.
- Exposure to certain medicines before birth.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals.
- Inability to suck or swallow.
- Child abuse or neglect. This includes physical and emotional abuse.

Sometimes the cause is not known.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Signs and symptoms of failure to thrive include:

- Learning disabilities.
- Being underweight.

DIAGNOSIS

To diagnose failure to thrive, your child's health care provider may:

- Ask you about the pregnancy and any problems that developed while your child was in the nursery.
- Ask you about your child's feeding habits.
- Do a physical exam of your child.
- Do blood and urine tests on your child.
- Do a psychological exam of your child.
- Take X-rays of your child.

TREATMENT

The earlier the evaluation and diagnosis are made, the more effective the treatment will be. Treatment will depend on what is causing your child's failure to thrive. This may include medical, physical, or psychological treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep all follow-up visits as directed by your child's health care provider. This is important.
- Give medicines only as directed by your child's health care provider.
- Work with a nutritionist, if needed, to evaluate your child's dietary needs.
- Keep a log or diary of your child's eating habits.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child loses weight.
- Your child will not eat or has difficulty eating.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

Your child who is younger than 3 months old has a temperature of 100°F (38°C) or higher.