

Faltering growth

This leaflet gives more information about faltering growth. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.

Faltering growth is when your child's weight gain is slower than expected for their age and sex.

It's normal for newborns to lose up to a tenth (10%) of their birth weight in the first few days after birth. However, as feeding patterns are established, most babies will regain their birth weight by about 3 weeks of age.

If their weight gain remains slow after this time it might be a sign that there are underlying issues. Usually these can be resolved with extra support and guidance.

Causes of faltering growth

Faltering growth can be caused by different factors, including:

- **Feeding difficulties.** This includes difficulties with breastfeeding or bottle feeding, irregular feeding schedules, and problems with feeding behaviour.
- **Breastfeeding challenges.** This includes ineffective latching, tongue-tie, and low milk supply.
- **Formula feeding issues.** This includes incorrect preparation of formula milk, and your baby not taking enough formula.
- **Feeding behaviour.** This includes limited or inconsistent feeding opportunities, or your baby not responding to feeding cues, feeding avoidance (aversion), and fussy eating.
- **Health conditions.** Some medical conditions, such as gastrointestinal (stomach) issues, neurodevelopmental concerns, and chronic (long-term) illnesses, might interfere with your baby's ability to absorb nutrients and grow as expected.
- **Social and environmental factors.** Postnatal depression, anxiety, stress, and challenges in the home environment, can also impact your baby's feeding and growth.

When to get medical advice

Speak to your healthcare provider if you are concerned about your baby's growth or feeding habits. Getting help early can make a big difference to your child's health and development.

You should get help if you notice:

- **persistent weight loss.** If your baby is losing weight after their first few days of life.
- **slower-than-expected weight gain.** If your baby is not gaining weight at the expected rate for their age and sex.
- **feeding difficulties.** If your baby is struggling with breastfeeding, bottle feeding, or you think that they are not getting enough milk.
- **signs of illness.** If your baby is unwell, vomiting (being sick) frequently, or is in continued discomfort.
- **changes in their feeding behaviour.** If your baby or child shows a lack of interest in feeding, has unusual feeding patterns (such as long gaps between feeds or difficulty finishing feeds).
- **parental wellbeing:** If you have postnatal depression or anxiety.

Diagnosis

Faltering growth is diagnosed by comparing your baby's birth and current weights with the UK average, and assessing the rate at which they're gaining weight. The UK World Health Organisation growth chart is used to track your baby's weight, length (height), and head circumference over time. A significant drop compared to the expected pattern might indicate faltering growth.

If faltering growth is suspected, your healthcare provider will take a detailed clinical, social and feeding assessment, and give you advice.

Getting the right support and ongoing monitoring

If faltering growth is identified, your primary care team (midwives, health visitors, and GPs), will monitor your baby's growth and offer personalised support.

Treatment might include:

- **Feeding support.** Advice about improving feeding techniques, reviewing feeding patterns, providing more frequent feeds, and considering extra feeding options if needed.
- **Medical treatment.** If an underlying health condition is diagnosed, treatment plans will be made to address it.
- **Ongoing monitoring.** Regular follow-up appointments will be scheduled to track your baby's growth and progress.

You might also be referred to specialists, such as:

- an infant feeding specialist for breastfeeding or bottle-feeding support
- a children's doctor for medical checks
- a dietitian for nutritional guidance
- a speech and language therapist for feeding difficulties
- a clinical psychologist if emotional issues are affecting feeding

Support and more information

The Child Growth Foundation, has information and offers peer support, **web:** <https://childgrowthfoundation.org/> **Helpline:** 020 8995 0257.

Coeliac UK, offers information, blogs and podcasts about coeliac disease, **web:** www.coeliac.org.uk/home/

Institute of Health Visiting provide factsheets and professional advice for parents, **web:** www.ihv.org.uk/

The British Dietetic Association have a specialist children's group, **web:** www.bda.uk.com/specialist-groups-and-branches/paediatric-specialist-group.html

World Health Organisation growth charts, **web:** www.who.int/tools/child-growth-standards/standards

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about faltering growth, please contact your health visiting, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Lambeth health visitor:

Phone: 020 3049 5300

Email: gst-tr.spahealthvisitingsservicelambeth@nhs.net

Southwark health visitor:

Phone: 020 3049 8166

Email: gst-tr.spahealthvisitingsservicesouthwark@nhs.net

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm
email: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone:** 020 7188 8801 **email:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint contact the resolution department **phone:** 020 7188 3514 **email:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the department your appointment is with.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone:** 111
web: www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web:** www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch, **phone:** 0800 731 0319 **email:** members@gstt.nhs.uk
web: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership



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