

Growth Spurts

My Child is Suddenly Clumsy...Should I be Concerned?

Growth spurts are when a lot of growing takes place in a short period of time. They are part of every child's development and often occur so quickly (a few days to a week) that no one notices until they have passed. While there is variability in which ages they occur, the most obvious times of rapid growth are in the *first year of life* and in *adolescents*. During growth spurts, the bones grow and the muscles are stretched to a new size. It may take time for muscles to adapt to their new size, meaning they don't work as efficiently as they had been. This discrepancy can result in your child seeming weak or clumsy – falling frequently and perhaps tripping over his or her own feet. Here is some general information about growth spurts followed by indicators that your child's clumsiness may be more than just from growth.

“Typical” growth and development:

- Noticeable rapid growth in the first year of life
- Slower growth in the toddler years
- Weeks or months of slow growth alternating with rapid growth spurts throughout development
- Noticeable rapid growth at time of puberty
 - Girls: between 8 and 13 years of age; often start before boys and grow quickly
 - Boys: between 10 and 15 years of age; often start later and grow more slowly

Signs of a growth spurt:

- Increased appetite – hungry more often and/or eating more at one sitting
- Increase in height and/or foot size – short pants and small shoes
- Sleeping/fatigue changes – needing more sleep
- Emotional roller-coaster – variable emotions and times of increased moodiness

Simple ways to support a child going through a growth spurt:

- Encourage getting adequate sleep – 8.5-9 hours per night
- Promote balanced nutrition – emphasis on protein, calcium & vitamin D to support growth of bone and muscle

Further considerations regarding clumsiness:

- Has my child been unable to keep up with peers for longer than 6 weeks?
- Does my child continue to falling frequently?
- Is my child developing injuries during regular play?
- Is my child having difficulty continuing to gain coordination?

If your answer was yes to one of the above or you have more concerns regarding your child's clumsiness, consider seeking a physical therapy evaluation. A pediatric physical therapist can identify your child's balance, coordination, and strength challenges and address them to promote mastery of age-appropriate skills and support safe participation in preferred activities.