

# Anorexia may stunt young women's growth

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Girls with anorexia nervosa can have stunted growth and may not reach their full height potential, according to a new study published in the Endocrine Society's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

Anorexia nervosa is a condition in which a person loses an unhealthy amount of weight on purpose by dieting, sometimes along with excessive exercise, binge eating, and/or purging behaviors. People with [anorexia](#) nervosa have an intense fear of gaining weight and a disturbed body image (such as thinking they are fat even when they are very underweight).

"Our findings emphasize the importance of early and intensive intervention aiming at normalization of body weight, which may result in improved growth and allow patients to reach their full height potential," said the study's corresponding author, Dalit Modan-Moses, M.D., of The Edmond and Lily Safra Children's Hospital, Chaim Sheba Medical Center, in Tel Hashomer, Israel. "We suggest that the height impairment is a marker for other complications of anorexia nervosa affecting the person's overall health in several aspects: bone

health, cognitive function, and problems with pregnancy and childbirth later in life. Early diagnosis and treatment could prevent, or at least reduce, the risk of these complications."

The researchers studied 255 girls around 15 years old who were hospitalized for anorexia nervosa. They measured their height at the time of admission, discharge and at [adult height](#) and found it was lower than expected. Adult height was significantly shorter than expected when compared to the genetic potential according to average of the patient's mother and father's heights.

"This study may have implications for the management of malnutrition in adolescents with other [chronic diseases](#) in order to achieve optimal adult height and bone health," Modan-Moses said.

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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