

Failure to Thrive

FACTS:

- **“Failure to thrive” is a term used when children do not gain weight like they should. Some children with this condition even die.**
- **It can be caused by a medical issue, such as heart defect, infection or cleft lip, or by a lack of emotional and physical stimulation.**
- **Failure to thrive can occur when a baby’s formula is mixed with more water than the package instructions state. This weak formula leads to poor nutrition and low weight gain.**
- **The main cause of failure to thrive, however, is a simple lack of touch and love. All babies need to be held and talked to. Babies can actually become depressed and lose the desire to eat when they do not have consistent loving care.**
- **Touching a baby helps calm him or her. Eye-to-eye contact is essential to the healthy development of a child.**
- **Children who are in institutions or hospitals are at an increased risk for failure to thrive. Many babies simply seem to “give up” their desire to grow.**
- **Failure to thrive should be identified early and appropriate treatment started so that normal growth and development can occur.**



All babies and children need to be touched and loved in order to grow properly.

SIGNS IN BABIES:

- **Decrease in weight gain or malnourishment. Children under two years old should gain weight every single month.**
- **Poor physical development. Child does not crawl, roll over, walk or talk at the same age as healthy children.**
- **Lack of interest in people and toys. Absence of smiling or vocalization.**
- **Dislikes being held and avoids eye-to-eye contact.**
- **Child is quiet and doesn’t cry or is frequently inconsolable, irritable and fussy.**
- **Poor feeding, vomiting, sleep disturbance or spitting up food.**
- **Decreased or absent appetite.**
- **Repetitive behaviors such as head banging and rocking—a sign more stimulation is needed.**



A child with no appetite should be evaluated for failure to thrive.

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TREATMENT:

- A doctor should examine the baby for medical causes such as heart defects or stomach disorders. If no medical disorders are found, the baby may be failing to thrive due to a lack of touch and stimulation.
- Formula should be properly prepared according to package directions.
- Loving care should be provided consistently. Caregivers should make eye contact every time when feeding the child. Playing "hide and seek" with your hand over your eyes to draw attention to your face may be helpful. Try singing in a gentle and pleasing voice when the child looks at your eyes and stop whenever he or she looks away to help encourage eye contact. Gently caressing the child's cheek during feeding may also help.
- Caregivers should talk softly and gently or sing to the baby during daily care activities like giving baths and diaper changing. Holding the baby close is important. Touching the baby gently and caressing the face, arms and hands is helpful while feeding and providing other daily care activities.
- The baby should be allowed to sit up and observe other babies around him or her to provide stimulation.
- The baby should be allowed to play with safe and appropriate objects, such as a colorful ball or rattle, for stimulation.
- Telling the baby short stories or letting him or her listen to soft music will also provide stimulation.



Caregivers should make eye contact with the children as much as possible.



Singing and talking to babies also help to stimulate them.

