

The symptoms and treatment of pituitary gland disorders

Written by: [DR HELEN SPOUDEAS](#)

Published: 12/02/2018 | Updated: 19/02/2021

Edited by: JAY STANILAND

Dr Helen Spoudeas clarifies the key symptoms of pituitary gland disorders and highlights the potential causes. She also explains the main type of treatment and if side effects from treatment can be expected.



What are the symptoms of pituitary disorders?

The symptoms of a malfunctioning pituitary gland depend on the cause. For example:

- It might cause the child to **grow too fast** if they have **too much growth hormone**.
- They might **get very heavy** if they have **too much cortisol**.
- If the tumour or the malfunctioning pituitary gland causes a **deficiency**, the child will **grow less well**, may not develop in puberty, and may not develop fertility in the future.

- If your child is an older child, their **physical development may begin and then stop**, and they may need help to complete it.

If there is a malfunction at the back of the pituitary gland, your child may **become very thirsty, drink lots of water and pass a lot of urine**. This is a condition that is reminiscent of sugar diabetes and is called [diabetes insipidus](#). A symptom of this is that **the urine is very clear and diluted** because of a lack of the hormone that allows you to concentrate and retain water. This can be a life-threatening situation, which is not always easily diagnosed, and may herald some disorders of the pituitary gland or some pituitary tumours.

What can cause pituitary gland disorders?

A malformed pituitary gland at birth

The pituitary gland can be **malformed at birth**. During the development of the embryo, the pituitary gland starts as an out-pouch from the mouth and grows upwards. It is located outside of the brain and connected to the brain by the pituitary stalk, and can be reached through the nose surgically.

If babies are born without enough development of the pituitary gland, it may cause blindness as well as hormone deficiencies and [hypothalamic disorders](#), which may cause issues such as weight loss, weight gain and dysfunctional puberty.

A pituitary tumour

Another reason why the pituitary gland may be malfunctioning is because of **pituitary tumours** that grow in the pituitary gland itself e.g. a [pituitary adenoma](#) which may be non-functioning or may sometimes produce hormones of its own.

There may be other non-functioning adenomas or [craniopharyngiomas](#) that arise in the pituitary gland and more malignant tumours that occur in the pituitary stalk. Furthermore, tumours of the optic pathway can grow down and compress the pituitary gland.

What is the treatment for pituitary tumour?

Any treatment for a tumour in the pituitary area can cause the pituitary to malfunction. It's important to have just the right amount of a hormone. Not too much and not too little. Having pituitary tumours can make too much of one particular hormone, effectively squashing out the others.

What is the treatment for hormone deficiency?

The treatment of a hormone deficiency is **hormone replacement therapy (HRT)**. All hormones can be replaced, most of them by tablets, but some require injections such as growth hormone. Hormone replacement therapy is very rewarding for an endocrinologist because we're replacing normality.

What are the side-effects of hormone replacement therapy?

There should be absolutely no side effects of the treatment. We aim to give the right amount in the most natural form. For example, female hormone replacement therapy can be given in a gradually increasing dose to induce puberty in the girl and can be given in very natural ways with natural hormones and even through transdermal preparations.

We have a physiological way of replacing hormones that do not cause any side-effects for all these hormones including [growth hormone](#), female hormone, male hormone and replacing anti-diuretic hormone.

Dr Helen Spoudeas has over 20 years of specialist expertise. Visit her [profile](#) to get in touch and address your concerns about your child's health.