



Stunting in a nutshell

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Stunting is the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. Children are defined as stunted if their height-for-age is more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards median.

Stunting in early life -- particularly in the first 1000 days from conception until the age of two - impaired growth has adverse functional consequences on the child. Some of those consequences include poor cognition and educational performance, low adult wages, lost productivity and, when accompanied by excessive weight gain later in childhood, an increased risk of nutrition-related chronic diseases in adult life.

Linear growth in early childhood is a strong marker of healthy growth given its association with morbidity and mortality risk, non-communicable diseases in later life, and learning capacity and productivity. It is also closely linked with child development in several domains including cognitive, language and sensory-motor capacities.

How can you stop stunting?

The video "**Stunting in a nutshell**" is an interactive version of the *WHO conceptual framework on the Context, Causes and Consequences of Childhood Stunting*

Chapter 1. Stunted growth: what is it?



Stunted growth refers to the failure to reach one's full potential for growth. But is not just about height...

Video [duration 00:04:42]

Chapter 2. Stunted growth: what actually causes it?



The most direct causes are inadequate nutrition (not eating enough or eating foods that lack growth-promoting nutrients) and recurrent infections or chronic diseases which cause poor nutrient intake, absorption or utilization. Then there is the lack of care and stimulation for development...

Video [duration 00:07:12]

Chapter 3. Stunted growth: it has consequences



Stunting is largely irreversible: a child cannot recover height in the same way that they can regain weight. Stunted children fall sick more often, miss opportunities to learn, perform less well in school and grow up to be economically disadvantaged, and more likely to suffer from chronic diseases.

Video [duration 00:05:23]

Chapter 4. Stunted growth: many sectors acting jointly can reduce stunting



Community programmes to ensure household access to proper sanitation, availability of clean water and diversified foods, poverty reduction support for families in need, education on how to feed young children and protect them from infection, and adequate, accessible health services to prevent and treat infections can collectively reduce stunting in populations.

Video [duration 00:07:09]

[Global Nutrition Targets 2025](#)

[Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Stunting policy brief](#)

[Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action \(GINA\)](#)