

## Growth Hormone (GH) Therapy for Children

Growth hormone (GH) therapy can have side effects. This handout describes known and possible side effects linked with growth hormone use. These side effects do not occur often, and, in most cases, they do not result in severe harm.

### **Swelling (Edema)**

Your child might have swollen hands, arms, legs, feet and face. Swelling can also cause wrist pain. These symptoms can happen early in treatment. This side effect may be increased with Turner Syndrome.

### **Increased Fluid Pressure in the Brain**

Watch for changes in behavior, headache that doesn't go away, vision changes, or vomiting. This occurs in 1 out of 1000 GH treated patients. The risk is highest in those with kidney failure, steroid use and possibly in the Prader-Willi syndrome.

### **Slipped Growth Plate in Hip**

Watch for pain in the knees, hips or limping. Children with GH deficiency, Turner Syndrome and kidney disease seem to have an increased risk before and while taking GH. Report any signs or symptoms right away. Early surgical treatment is needed to protect the hips.

### **High Blood Sugar**

This side effect is rare. Watch for increased hunger, thirst, urination, or unexplained weight loss. Obesity, Turner's syndrome, and steroid use increases risk.

### **Increased Mole Growth**

Moles may grow faster or increase in number. None have been found to be malignant. Report any burning, itching or bleeding of moles.

### **In Children Who Had Cancer**

A new cancer may occur. This most likely affects timing of occurrence. Radiation therapy and some disease states can increase risk.

### **Inflammation of the Pancreas**

Symptoms could include severe stomach pain, vomiting, and jaundice (yellow color of skin). There can be an increased risk in kidney failure.

Before using growth hormone, your doctor will discuss any increased risks for your child. The doctor will talk with you about any conditions which need to be closely watched.