

TALL order for kids

City doctors say parents will go to any length to make their children taller, with hormones or even surgery

A couple approached me with their 12-year-old child who was 4'9". But they wanted an operation to make him 6 feet tall as an adult."

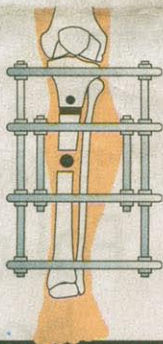
—Vividh Makwana, orthopaedician

Anandita Chatterjee, Mumbai

Shama and Rajesh Salunkhe took their one-year-old baby girl to their paediatrician in Mumbai recently. They are both around five feet tall, and feel their daughter might be at a height disadvantage. They were advised to introduce the child to swimming for healthy growth. But they were back after a month to ask what more could be done.

"Competition is making parents desperate to give even tiny tots an early advantage," says Sonali Tank, owner of the Ashwini Maternity and Surgical Centre in Ghatkopar. "Taller children are generally more aggressive, and parents believe this will also make them more successful in life."

Manisha Soni has put her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter Sakshi on medication to gain height, after looking at the other kids in her playschool. "I thought when Sakshi goes to pre-primary, taller kids would bully her and this would hurt her both physically and emotionally," she says. **CONTD, P18**



Limb lengthening

G Ilazarov discovered that when a bone is cut and the segments are separated from each other at a rate of 1mm a day, new bone forms in the gap and the skin, muscles, blood vessels and nerves also grow alongside the bone. This surgery using a steel frame with screws to separate the bone segments costs Rs3 lakh.

Fitbone technology

Manufactured by a German company, Fitbone is an implantable rod which gradually increases the distance between two bone segments. A Fitbone surgery takes 4-6 hours and costs Rs20-30 lakh. The maximum increase in height attained by this technique so far is 12cm. The implanted rod is removed after a year.

Growth hormone

Human Growth Hormone (hGH) is the most abundant hormone produced by the pituitary gland. Recombinant Growth Hormone (rhGH) is identical to the human growth hormone but is synthesized in the lab. The cost of growth hormone is Rs600-1200/mg. The yearly cost for a 30 kg child would work out to around Rs3.3 lakh