Growth supplements to make up for lost ground during puberty? [1]

alice,

i am a healthy male aged 22-years-old. i have recently looked into the possibility of growth supplements as i was a vegetarian during my very active teenage years and am concerned that a lack of protein may have inhibited my growth in these years. is there any possibility of:

(a) making up 'lost ground' at this stage in my life?;
(b) there being any truth behind the claims made by these companies who sell growth supplements? i am struggling to find any independent evidence!

many thanks.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Your desire to try to make up for the "lost ground" is understandable. However, no scientific research backs the idea that one can physically grow substantially taller after the completion of puberty by altering what one eats. Also, there's a good chance that your eating plan (depending upon how strict a vegetarian you were) during your teenage years probably did not inhibit your height growth, especially if you ate and drank dairy products, beans, and nuts, which would have allowed you to have gotten your share of protein.

It's unusual for healthy men and women in their twenties to grow taller, as height is dependent on our bones, which are normally fully mature by this time. The only certain method of triggering a growth spurt at your level of maturity is to take growth hormones, which jumpstart endocrine functioning. However, these are prescribed by medical professionals only for people who have serious growth disorders caused by endocrinological or genetic conditions, such as hypothyroidism and/or Turner's Syndrome.

Consider why you would like to be taller. Are you within the normal height range for your age? Has a health care provider ever determined that you are too short for your age? Do you wish that you were taller purely for aesthetic reasons? These are all relevant and important questions to ask yourself.

As your height and your fears about the results of your extreme vegetarianism seem to bother you, you may want to consult your primary care provider (PCP) first, if you haven't already, for the best information on if or how you might grow safely at your current age. Your PCP will ask
for your medical and family history, as well as examine you. Based on what s/he finds, the PCP may refer you to a specialist, such as an expert in bone development or an endocrinologist, for bone age and/or other testing. If treatment is suggested, you need to consider the potential risks and weigh them against the fact that you probably will not benefit from a boost in height at your age.

Alice!
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