Hey kids, did you just jump up a shoe size? If so, watch out. Soon, you might have to replace those pants you’re wearing, too. Why? During puberty, our hands and feet grow faster than the long bones in our arms and legs. So, if you’ve outgrown your favorite shoes, then you’re likely about to get a heck of a lot taller, and quick—something called, you’ve probably heard of it, a growth spurt.

Young men and women go through growth spurts at different times. Girls grow taller sooner, starting around age 9 or 10 and accelerating around 11 or 12. Boys’ growth spurts start around 11, with their fastest growth around 13.

Interesting tidbit: Your body goes through its fastest growth during your first two years of life and during puberty. And a related bit: Your spine actually doubles in size from birth to age 2; then it doubles again by the time you reach your full height.

Doctors can predict about how tall you’re going to be as an adult by doubling how tall you were at 18 months old (for girls) and 2 years old (for boys).

You can also figure out how tall you will be if you know your mother’s and father’s heights. If you’re a girl, add your parents’ heights, subtract 5 inches, and divide that number by 2. If you’re a boy, add your parents’ heights, add 5 inches, and divide the result by 2. Pretty darn cool.

Your parents’ heights are the biggest influence on yours, but lifestyle and environment also play roles. If you eat right, sleep well, and exercise, you’re more likely to wind up at a higher altitude. So... another serving of those veggies?

—Kristin Bundy

Thanks to Pitt and Children’s Hospital surgeon Patrick Bosch for helping us bone up on height. For more science for kids, see howscienceworks.pitt.edu.