How tall will your children be? Here are the nature versus nurture factors

We often consider our height as being unchangeable, determined by our genetic make-up from when we were conceived. After all, tall parents usually have tall children and vice versa.

Can height be significantly influenced by environmental factors like diet, or is it hard-wired into our DNA?

Professor Peter Visscher, an expert in genetics from Queensland University in Australia, says, “There is a lot of evidence that height increases over time when countries industrialize and/or get wealthier, and this change must be environmental because genetic factors don’t change over short periods of time (e.g. decades).”

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Multiple case studies have highlighted how diet affects height. Professor Saverio Alberti, an expert in genetics from Messina University in Italy, says, “An example that may fit is the height of newborns during the 1944 famine in the Netherlands.”

Children who were born or grew up during this famine were about 4cm shorter than the average Dutch height of the time.

It is generally accepted that about 80 percent of height is influenced by genetics. Your DNA determines your maximum potential height, whilst environmental factors determine whether you reach this maximum or not.

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