

Age at Start of Puberty in Children Born with HIV

Children with HIV start puberty later than other children. HIV medications may help children with HIV to start puberty at a more typical age.

What we wanted to know

We looked at when puberty began in children with HIV compared to children without HIV. We also looked to see if there was a link between taking certain HIV medicines and when puberty began.

Who we studied

We looked at 2,539 children born to mothers with HIV.

- 2,086 children had HIV
- 453 children did not have HIV

What we did

We used doctors' reports of the girls and boys in our study. We looked at:

- For girls, whether their breasts or pubic hair had started growing
- For boys, the growth of their penis and testicles or pubic hair

What we found

Children without HIV were similar to U.S. children in general.

- They started puberty at 9½ to 10½ years old, on average.
- Black children usually started puberty earlier than white children.

Children with HIV had delays in puberty.

- They started puberty **6 to 11 months later** than the children without HIV
- Children with worse HIV disease started puberty 4 -12 months later, on average, than healthier children with HIV.
- In the last decade, children on combination therapy* usually started puberty earlier than children not taking this therapy.

**Combination therapy is three or more drugs from two or more different HIV drug classes.*

What we learned

- Children with HIV usually start puberty later than children without HIV.
- Children with the worst (or most advanced) HIV disease start puberty the latest.
- Combination therapy for HIV may help children start puberty at a more typical age.

Reference Info:

Concept Sheet #C053

2013. *AIDS (27) 12, pp. 1959-70.*



For more info, contact:

Claire Berman

Director, Health Education & Communication

617-432-1853

cberman@sdac.harvard.edu