

Data analysis reveals link between age of puberty onsite and health in later life

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A team of researchers with Cambridge University's MRC Epidemiology Unit has found a link between the age of onset of puberty and many health conditions that occur later on in life. In their paper published in the journal *Scientific American*, the team describes their analyses and results.

Prior research has suggested that early onset of [puberty](#) in girls raised their chances of developing type 2 diabetes and [heart disease](#) later on in life. The researchers with this new effort confirmed those finding and added on more.

To learn more about the impact of early or late onset of puberty, the researchers studied data collected as part of UK Biobank, a database holding medical information for approximately half a million people

living in Britain over the course of their lives. As part of the study, female volunteers had been asked to list when they had their first period and males were asked when their voice broke.

By comparing puberty onset ages against health conditions later in life, the team found a connection: Both males and females that started puberty earlier than the norm had nearly double the chance of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease later on in life. They also found some gender differences—girls who went through puberty later than the norm were at a higher risk for heart disease, whereas for late male bloomers, the risk was diminished. Some of the health conditions linked to puberty age were: angina, heart attacks and hypertension, some cancers, depression, asthma, glaucoma and obesity.

Prior research had also noted that there appeared to be a link between early onset of puberty in girls and obesity, which it was believed was the cause of some of the later life health impacts. The new data suggests that while [obesity rates](#) were linked to early or late onset of puberty, it was not the defining factor for other health impacts.

In all the team found 48 health conditions that appeared to be more or less likely to occur if a person developed early or late, though the researchers caution against panic for people who went through puberty early or late, noting that it did not mean they would have health problems, it just meant the odds were a little higher.

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