

Pubertal timing strongly influences men's sexual and reproductive health

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A new study from Rigshospitalet and EDMaRC finds a strong association between late onset of puberty and subsequent semen quality. This is the first study of its kind to investigate the influence of pubertal timing on male reproductive health. 1068 healthy young Danish men participated in the study and provided information on the timing of puberty. This suggests that timing of pubertal onset may be a fundamental marker of male reproductive health.

Pubertal onset marks the transition period between childhood and adulthood during which adult reproductive capacity is attained. The age at pubertal onset varies considerably from 9 to 14 years and depends on individual genetic variations, epigenetic modifications, lifestyle and environmental factors. However, no previous studies have assessed the long-term influence of the timing of puberty on subsequent reproductive health in healthy [men](#). It is important to understand pubertal timing as early pubertal onset can influence the risk of developing a number of health disorders such as obesity and diabetes in adulthood. Delayed puberty has been associated with psychosocial problems, as well as, with a risk of later obesity and cardiovascular disease. This study is the first to report a link between pubertal timing and the adult reproductive function emphasizing that timing of pubertal onset is fundamentally associated with overall male health in later life.

About the study

1068 19-year old Danish men were invited to participate in the study after a mandatory medical examination before being considered for military service. They were asked to complete a questionnaire including detailed information on whether pubertal changes occurred before, at the same time or later than among their peers. In addition, all men delivered a semen sample and blood sample and underwent a physical examination.

The results from the study showed that men who reported earlier or later onset of puberty than their peers had a poorer semen quality and smaller testicles at age 19 years of age. Men with a history of early puberty were shorter, had a higher BMI and were often smokers or exposed to prenatal tobacco smoke. There was also a higher report of sexually transmitted diseases compared to men who had a normal pubertal onset.

Senior author, Professor Anders Juul adds, "Understanding the implications of the timing of puberty for your future [reproductive health](#) is important, as we speculate that [puberty timing](#) influences general health and risk of disease later in life."

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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