

# ADHD medications may reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infection

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Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) increases the risk of subsequent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adolescent and young adult populations by about three times, reports a study published in the January 2018 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP)*.

The authors also found that short- and long-term use of ADHD medication reduced the risk of subsequent STIs among men by 30% and 41%, respectively.

"ADHD is the most common neurodevelopmental disorder, and affects approximately 5%-7% of children and adolescents and 2% of young adults," said lead author Mu-Hong Chen, MD, a physician at the Taipei Veterans General Hospital and the College of Medicine, National Yang-Ming University, Taipei. "Increasing evidence supports an association between ADHD and various health-risk behaviors, such as risky driving, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviors. Clinical psychiatrists [should] focus on the occurrence of [risky sexual behaviors](#) and the risk of STIs among patients with ADHD, and emphasize that treatment with ADHD medications may be a protective factor for prevention of STIs."

The findings are based on the Taiwan National Health Insurance Research Database, which is a nationally representative database of medical claims and healthcare data from > 99% of the entire Taiwan population.

A cohort of 17,898 adolescents and young adults who were diagnosed with ADHD and 71,592 age and sex-matched non-ADHD controls who did not have STIs prior to enrollment were studied.

Adolescents aged 12-17 years and young adults aged 18-29 years were followed from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2009. The researchers tracked data related to risk of STIs, including HIV, syphilis, genital warts, gonorrhea, chlamydial infection, and trichomoniasis, psychiatric comorbidity, and pharmacologic treatment for ADHD (methylphenidate or atomoxetine).

The researchers found that adolescents and young adults with ADHD had greater incidence of any STI (1.2% versus 0.4%), and developed STIs at a younger age ( $20.51 \pm 4.48$  versus  $21.90 \pm 4.49$ ) as compared to age- and sex-matched peers.

They also found that those adolescents and [young adults](#) with ADHD had a higher prevalence of [psychiatric comorbidity](#), including disruptive behavior disorder (13.5% v. 0.3%), alcohol use disorders (1.1% versus 0.5%), and substance use disorders (2.5% versus 0.8%).

Male short-term (HR 0.70) and long-term (HR 0.59) ADHD medication users had a significantly lower risk of developing any STI during follow-up.

**More information:** Mu-Hong Chen et al, Sexually Transmitted Infection Among Adolescents and Young Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Nationwide Longitudinal Study, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaac.2017.09.438](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.09.438)

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