

Study to examine how sex hormones affect teenage girls' emotions

March 28 2019



Credit: Ashley Harrigan/Flickr

Teenage years can be a turbulent time, thanks to a sharp increase in hormones. What's not known is the role that these hormones, along with physical and social changes, have in the maturing teenage brain.

UBC's Social Health Lab has launched a new study to explore how sex hormones shape teens' emotions over time. If you have a daughter between the ages of 13-15, you and your daughter are invited to join this study and take part in an important conversation on the developing health and emotions in teenagers.

Bitia Zareian, a Master's student working with Dr. Frances Chen in UBC's department of psychology, spoke with us about this research.

What is the motivation for this study?

The main purpose is to investigate how hormonal changes during adolescence can affect teenagers' emotions, [social interaction](#) and mental health. During adolescence, our bodies naturally start producing sex hormones. Some girls and women may also be exposed to sex hormones contained in drugs and medications, such as birth control pills. These sex hormones not only regulate the menstrual cycle, they also affect emotions and social interactions. There is evidence suggesting that sex hormones can affect our reactivity to stress, and that imbalances in these hormones can contribute to the development of mental health problems. Therefore, we are trying to answer these questions through this study: How do sex hormones affect teenagers' emotions? Do sex hormones shape social interactions and peer relationships that develop during adolescence? And why are some teenagers more susceptible to these changes and develop emotional difficulties?

How will you identify these factors?

We are recruiting females aged 13 to 15. We will collect saliva samples to measure sex hormones and stress hormones. We also use saliva samples to determine whether and how genetic variables contribute to various levels of sex hormones in the body, and the role they play in

emotional and social development. We conduct interviews with the teenagers to get a sense of their moods, health-related behaviours, stress, and social support. We will then follow up with them after 18 and 36 months to see how changes in their [hormone](#) levels have affected their emotional and social development.

Once you've completed the study, what do you hope will happen with the information?

We will make our research findings available to the public through multiple media channels. We hope that our research will help teenagers and their parents, as well as the larger scientific and medical community, understand how sex hormones influence emotional and social development. The results of this study could also help teenagers and their parents make more informed decisions about the use of medications that alter levels of [sex hormones](#).

What can families expect if they decide to participate?

Families will first be scheduled to come to our lab at UBC for two sessions during which they will complete interviews and answer some questions, and do some computerized tasks. We will also ask the teenagers to collect [saliva samples](#) at home. We will then repeat these procedures after 18 and 36 months. For more information on our study, families can visit our website at blogs.ubc.ca/teenstudy.

How can families sign up to participate?

Families can apply on the study website, send us an email at teenstudy@psych.ubc.ca, or leave a voicemail at 604-822-9557.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Study to examine how sex hormones affect teenage girls' emotions (2019, March 28)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-03-sex-hormones-affect-teenage-girls.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.