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July 1, 2002 By [Mike Barr](#)

Study results from researchers at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) report an increased rate of DNA damage in the fetuses of monkeys treated with double-nucleoside analog therapy (AZT/3TC) compared to those of monkey moms who got AZT alone. How these findings apply to human fetuses exposed to AZT to prevent HIV transmission, however, is unclear. The fear is that nuke-induced mutations in the fetal DNA pose a risk for the development of certain cancers. A 1996 NCI study suggested a link between high-dose AZT and liver, lung and reproductive tumors in female mice, though a government review and a separate low-dose AZT study found no risk of tumors in humans. But the CDC says that it has not a single report of cancer in babies born to women taking AZT during pregnancy and that the immediate risk of HIV transmission is far greater than the theoretical risk of developing cancer in later life.

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