Test-Tube Babies

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Researchers have been experimenting with HIV drugs lately—not to lower viral loads (we already know how to do that), but for other health benefits. Here are some intriguing ways HIV meds might be used, all still in early experimental stages. Will these meds perform in your body as they do in the test tube? Stay tuned.

- **Fighting Cancer With Kaletra:** The drug lopinavir (found in Kaletra) seems to kill cervical cells that have been infected with the human papillomavirus (HPV)—cells that can go on to become cancerous if left to their own devices. Lopinavir seems to target the precancerous cells without harming other cells in the cervix. The dose needed to shut down the cells is some 10 to 15 times higher than the lopinavir concentration in Kaletra, so researchers are developing and testing a high-potency topical version.
  - For women with HIV, who have much higher rates of HPV-related cancers than negative women, this could be a very useful development. And it seems likely that it would work on anal cells too, thus defending against HPV-related anal cancer.
- **Reducing Inflammation with Tenofovir or Selzentry:** HIV not only kills off some immune cells, but also revs up the immune system, keeping cells active when they should be resting. Tenofovir (an HIV drug found in Viread, Truvada and Atripla) might suppress or reduce this chronic activity. This could, in turn, prevent some immune damage that takes place in people living with the virus—even when HIV meds are keeping their viral loads undetectable—and it may even help reduce the risk of conditions associated with inflammation.
  - And since 2009, Selzentry (maraviroc) has been known to suppress immune inflammation. This entry inhibitor continues to be studied for that effect.

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