HIV Is Linked to Missed Periods Among Women

Amenorrhea, defined as a lack of a menstrual period for three months or longer, is also associated with low bodyweight.

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Women living with HIV are more likely to experience multiple missed menstrual periods than those who do not have the virus, in particular if they have low body weight, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in the journal AIDS, researchers conducted a meta-analysis of six studies published between 1996 and 2010 that included 8,925 women with HIV and 6,570 HIV-negative women. Except for one study conducted in Nigeria, all studies were conducted in the United States. The median age of the women ranged between 33 and 37 years old.

The analysis defined the condition known as amenorrhea as not having a menstrual period for three months or longer. Some studies included in the analysis defined amenorrhea more strictly: as not having a period for at least 12 months and having follicle-stimulating hormone levels below 25.

Five percent of the women with HIV had amenorrhea.

The researchers found that HIV was associated with a 68 percent increased risk of amenorrhea. Most of the studies showed no significant association between amenorrhea and substance use, smoking or socioeconomic status among the HIV-positive and -negative women. On the other hand, a majority of studies found that having a low body mass index (BMI) was associated with a greater frequency of amenorrhea among the women with HIV compared with the HIV-negative women.

“Our findings reinforce the importance of routine assessment of reproductive health and time of last menstrual period as part of the health assessment of women, especially those living with HIV,” the study authors concluded.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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