Concerns: Youths With HIV Enter Care Late

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Teens and young adults with HIV often delay entering medical care for the virus until late in the course of their disease. Combing the records of nearly 1,500 HIV-positive 12- to 24-year-olds seen in clinics between 2002 and 2010, researchers found that 30 to 45 percent of them sought treatment after their CD4 levels had dropped below 350. Recent research has found manifold benefits to starting HIV therapy before crossing that threshold. This new study found that those entering care with lower CD4 counts tended to have higher viral loads, making them more likely to pass along the virus. Black youths were more than twice as likely as white ones to start care with low CD4s, and Latinos were 1.7-times as likely to do so as whites. Males were more likely than females to seek care late. And men infected heterosexually tended to enter care later than those infected through sex with men.

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