

Kids Born With HIV Growing Up Well

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Once facing an almost certain death sentence, most children born with HIV are now faring well into adolescence and adulthood, according to a newly published study co-authored by Tulane infectious diseases expert Dr. Russell Van Dyke. The study was published in the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*.

"About two thirds of these kids, at this point, don't have virus detectable in the blood," says Van Dyke, professor and chief of the section of pediatric infectious diseases. "While they are still infected and they are not cured, it's surprising how well they're doing, considering what they've been through."

The Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study is tracking the effects and complications of a lifetime of infection and its treatment. "We're not seeing the deaths we used to see due to infections, but we're starting to worry about longer-term complications," Van Dyke says. "Some of these complications may be related to the HIV itself, or some may be related to the medications these kids are on."

The complications that Van Dyke looks at in the study range from coronary artery disease to neurological and cognitive problems. He says that analyzing the long-term prognosis for these patients is a "nice problem to have," because it indicates that their disease can be treated as chronic, more akin to diabetes than cancer. Van Dyke expects many of the patients in his study to have a normal or near normal life span.

"These kids are doing very well," Van Dyke says. "They're going to school and doing all of the things that kids should do. Hopefully, they will be living 50 or 60 years or more, so what's going to happen 40 years from now is the real concern."

The other good news, according to Van Dyke, is that cases of newborns with HIV are becoming increasingly rare. Mother-to-baby transmission of HIV has been nearly eradicated because of advances in treatment.