

# Long-term ART and Health

Most children born with perinatal HIV (PHIV) in the US take antiretroviral therapy (ART) starting at a young age. This helps keep the amount of HIV in their blood low and their immune systems strong. We looked at whether taking ART during childhood has other effects on their health.

## Findings



Children living with PHIV with very low amounts of virus (undetectable) for a long time have less HIV hiding in their cells.

When they do well on ART, they have fewer infections and stay healthier. Routine childhood vaccines (i.e., mumps, measles, and rubella) also protect them better.

Children living with PHIV seem to be more likely to get cavities. We aren't sure why. Keeping teeth and gums healthy is important for their overall health.

Children



Young adults

Many youth struggle with adherence (taking their HIV medicines correctly). Some may have HIV that is resistant (does not respond) to certain ART drugs.

As they become adults, youth who struggle with adherence are more likely to have high viral load, a weaker immune system, and other medical problems.

Thankfully, there are new kinds of ART that doctors can prescribe. However, it is important for us to support youth in taking their ART as they get older. This can keep them healthy. It also helps make sure they still have treatment options.



## What can you do?

**Ask your doctor or study coordinator** if you have questions about the long-term effects of ART on your health, or if you would like support taking your medication.



**Advocate for research** on how to support good ART adherence for youth living with PHIV. Contact your study coordinator to join the PHACS Community Advisory Board or another local advocacy organization.

