

Researchers find link between childhood abuse and age at menarche

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Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) have found an association between childhood physical and sexual abuse and age at menarche. The findings are published online in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Researchers led by corresponding author, Renée Boynton-Jarrett, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics at BUSM, found a 49 percent increase in risk for early onset menarche (menstrual periods prior to age 11 years) among women who reported childhood [sexual abuse](#) compared to those who were not abused. In addition, there was a 50 percent increase in risk for late onset menarche (menstrual periods after age 15 years) among women who reported severe physical [abuse](#) in childhood. The participants in the study included 68,505 women enrolled in the Nurses' Health Study II, a prospective cohort study.

"In our study [child abuse](#) was associated with both accelerated and delayed age at menarche and importantly, these associations vary by type of abuse, which suggest that child abuse does not have a homogenous effect on health outcomes," said Boynton-Jarrett. "There is a need for future research to explore characteristics of child abuse that may influence health outcomes including type, timing and severity of abuse, as well as the social context in which the abuse occurs."

Child abuse is associated with a significant health burden over the life course. Early menarche has been associated with risks such as cardiovascular disease, metabolic dysfunction, cancer and depression,

while late [menarche](#) has been associated with lower bone mineral density and depression.

"We need to work toward better understanding how child abuse influences health and translate these research findings into clinical practice and public health strategies to improve the well-being of survivors of child abuse," added Boynton-Jarrett.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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