

**WHO RECOMMENDATIONS**

ON

# **Adolescent Health**

GUIDELINES APPROVED BY THE  
WHO GUIDELINES REVIEW COMMITTEE

**AUGUST 2017**



**World Health  
Organization**



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# Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ANC	antenatal care
ART	antiretroviral therapy
ARV	antiretroviral
AZT	zidovudine
BW	body weight
CCT	controlled cord traction
EFZ	efavirenz
FTC	emtricitabine
G6PD	glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase
GDG	Guidelines Development Group
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation
GRC	Guidelines Review Committee
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
IM	intramuscular
IV	intravenous
3TC	lamuvudine
mg	milligram
NTD	neural tube defects
NVP	nevirapine
NNRTI	non-nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitor
NRTI	nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitor
PMTCT	prevention of mother-to-child transmission
PPH	postpartum haemorrhage
TDF	tenofovir
WHO	World Health Organization

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# Introduction

This publication on WHO recommendations related to adolescent health is one of four in a series; the others relate to maternal, newborn and child health. The objective of this document is to make available WHO recommendations on adolescent health in one easy-to-access document for WHO staff, policy-makers, programme managers, and health professionals. The compilation can also help better define gaps to prioritize guideline updates.

This document is meant to respond to the questions:

- What health interventions should the adolescent receive and when should s/he receive it?
- What health behaviours should the adolescent practise (or not practise)?

Sections in this compilation either reflect adolescent-specific recommendations only or these and adolescent-relevant recommendations.

**Adolescent-specific recommendations:** Recommendations that specifically address adolescents and are different from recommendations for other population groups e.g. adults or children

**Adolescent-relevant recommendations:** Recommendations that apply to adolescents as well as other population groups (e.g. adults or children)

WHO produces guidelines according to the highest international standards for guideline development. The main principles are transparency and minimizing bias in every step of the process. The process of developing guidelines is documented in *WHO Handbook for guideline development*.<sup>1</sup> The development process includes the synthesis and assessment of the quality of evidence, and is based on the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach. GRADE categorizes the quality (or certainty) of the evidence underpinning a recommendation as high, moderate, low or very low.

- High: further research is very unlikely to change our confidence in the estimate of effect;
- Moderate: further research is likely to have an impact on our confidence in the effect;
- Low: further research is very likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the effect and is likely to change the estimate of effect;
- Very low: any estimate of effect is very uncertain.

Once the quality of the body of evidence on benefits and harms has been assessed, an expert group formulates the recommendations using a structured evidence to decision framework. When determining whether to recommend an intervention or not, the expert group carefully considers the balance of benefits and harms of an intervention, and other factors such as values and preferences of persons affected by the recommendation, stakeholders' perceptions of the acceptability and feasibility of the options and interventions, resource implications, the importance of the problem, and equity and human rights considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook for guideline development*, 2nd edition. Geneva, WHO, 2014.

The expert group then decides on the strength of the recommendation – strong or conditional. A strong recommendation is one where the desirable effects of adhering to the recommendation outweigh the undesirable effects. Recommendations that are conditional or weak are made when the expert group is less certain about the balance between the benefits and harms or disadvantages of implementing a recommendation. Conditional recommendations generally include a description of the conditions under which the end-user should or should not implement the recommendation.

The quality of evidence and strength of the recommendation, as well as the link to the source, are included in this publication. Different expert groups may employ different terminology in the guideline processes. We suggest the Reader refer to the Source where more details are available.

The current publication includes updates and new guidelines up until 2017.

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