

Why is my 10-year-old son developing pubic hair?

Q Dear Doctor, My 10-year-old son has already grown pubic hair, something I think has come early. I am worried. What would cause a young boy to grow pubic hair so early? Peter

A Dear Peter, Among several boys, early pubic (or underarm) hair is caused by something called premature adrenarche.

This happens when the adrenal glands start producing small amounts of "weak" male hormones (androgens) earlier than usual. This can cause pubic hair, body odour or slightly oily skin, without other signs of puberty.

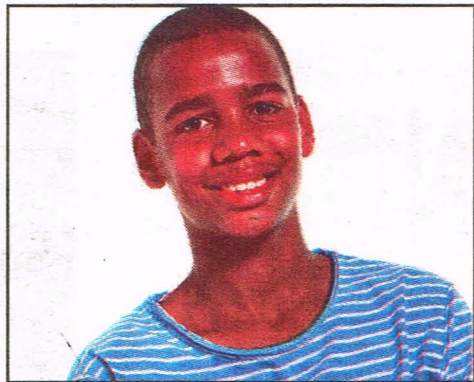
Importantly, it does not mean true puberty has started, and in most cases, it's gentle and just needs monitoring.

Early puberty is less common, but important to check. True puberty in boys usually starts after age 11 to 12, and the first sign is testicular enlargement, not pubic hair.

If your son also has rapid height growth, voice changes, acne or testicle growth, doctors may consider precocious puberty.

This is uncommon, but doctors take it seriously because it can affect adult height if untreated.

Other, rarer causes include exposure to hormones (for example, testosterone



Most boys with this condition grow and develop normally

gels or creams used by an adult in the household) and certain medical conditions involving the adrenal glands.

Obesity can sometimes be linked to earlier hormonal changes too.

Most boys with isolated early pubic hair grow and develop normally and don't need treatment. All you have to do is observe and reassure your son. The key is distinguishing early hormone signals from true early puberty and that's something doctors are very good at doing.

I advise you to visit a paediatrician (or a paediatric endocrinologist) to check your son's growth rate and also examine the testicular size.