

# What Parents Need to Know About Puberty Blockers

Gender dysphoria isn't limited to adults like Bruce (Caitlyn) Jenner, but it is also affecting children.

The condition, also called "transsexualism" or "transgender" is when a person feels they are not the gender they physically appear to be.

In their book *Inside Out: Portraits of Cross-gender Children*, photojournalists Sarah Wong and Ellen de Visse documented the lives of several children involved with VU University in Amsterdam who had gender dysphoria.

Many of the children took blockers to delay the effects of puberty until they decided how they want to live the rest of their lives.

Though puberty blocking has become a standard practice in many countries, including the United States, the hormones can have other side affects on the children.

"These puberty blockers are powerful. They're synthetic hormones. We know synthetic hormones can increase cancer risk," psychiatrist Dr. Karl Benzio, founder of Lighthouse Network, said.

"They interfere with our bone and muscle development. They also interfere with our thinking—during puberty there is significant brain development that goes on," he explained.

"With psychotherapy, they're able to understand reasons why they're insecure or why they identify with the gender that's not the gender they were born with, and how to help them work through that process so normal puberty and adolescence can happen," Benzio added.

“Whenever puberty does come, it often with that development helps them start to feel comfortable with who they are in their born gender so they can feel more comfortable with that,” he said.