

Abstract

Pubertal growth and development were compared in 342 privileged, urban children and 347 impoverished rural adolescents from Kenya. Measurements of height, weight, upper arm circumference, and triceps skinfolds revealed marked differences between the two study groups just before the onset of sexual maturation. These differences were also found in the early stages of puberty but notable catch-up was evident throughout the later period of the maturational process. Early stages of sexual maturity were delayed by 3 yr in malnourished boys with a 2.1-yr lag in the age of onset of menarche in rural girls. Derived estimates of body fat as well as direct anthropometry revealed that the onset of puberty is not size related under the circumstances of chronic childhood malnutrition.