

Lifewire: Study looks at preschool benefits that go beyond educational achievement

by Ven_Griva

The sooner a child starts to receive an education, the more likely that child will lead a healthy and productive life. So says a study published Aug. 6 in the Journal of the American Medical Association's Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

Led by Arthur Reynolds and Judy Temple, both of the University of Minnesota, the Chicago Longitudinal Study focused on minority preschoolers from low-income families who participated in a comprehensive school-based intervention. Reynolds is a child development professor at the university's College of Education and Human Development and Temple is a professor in the department of applied economics at the university's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

"This study is the first to show that large-scale established programs run by schools can have enduring effects into adulthood on general health and well-being," Reynolds said. "Early childhood programs can promote not only educational success but health status and behavior."

Reynolds, who directed the study, and his team of researchers found that by age 24, children who were involved in preschool programs were more likely to finish high school, attend four-year colleges and have health insurance coverage. They were less likely to be arrested for a felony, be incarcerated or develop symptoms of depression.

The Chicago Longitudinal Study was started in 1986 to investigate the effects of government-funded programs for 1,539 young children enrolled in Chicago Public Schools. Participants were low-income, minority children born in 1979 and 1980 who attended preschool programs at 25 sites between 1985 and 1986. They were compared with 550 children who did not attend preschool, but started their public school education in full-day kindergarten programs available to low-income families.

Reynolds, Temple and their team tracked the more than 1,000 children involved in the study through age 24.

The preschool group completed high school at higher rates than those from the kindergarten group, 71.4 percent to 63.7 percent. Those from the preschool group were more likely to have health insurance than those of the kindergarten group, 70.2 to 61.5 percent. Those from the preschool group also had lower rates of felony arrests, 16.5 percent to 21.1 percent and lower depressive symptoms, 12.8 percent to 7.4 percent.

That preschool benefits went beyond educational achievement is not surprising given the links between education, mental and physical health and behavior, Reynolds and Temple said in the study.

"Because expenditures for the medical care and justice systems comprise roughly 20 percent of the gross domestic product, the potential cost savings to governments and taxpayers of early childhood prevention programs are considerable."

"Children who participated in this program had a greater recognition that more and higher quality schooling is the way out of poverty," Reynolds said.

PRICKLY HEAT

For much of the United States, the summer of 2007 has been hot and muggy. One outcome of such uncomfortable weather is a skin ailment that goes by the names of heat rash or prickly heat.

Prickly heat occurs when the sweat glands clog and sweat becomes trapped under the surface of the skin. It typically results in patches of little red bumps, usually on the neck, upper chest, elbows, groin, underarms, or any place skin folds touch. It can occur at any age, but is more prevalent on the elderly and on infants, whose parents might overdress them and consequently they have difficulty staying cool.

"Heat rashes aren't serious, but they can be annoying," said Dr. Amit Pandya, professor of dermatology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Pandit says that prickly heat seldom calls for medical treatment.

"A heat rash should go away on its own after moving to a cooler environment and using powders such as baby or talcum powder," Pandit says.

Occasionally, however, a yeast infection might occur, which appears as more intense redness and small bumps. This is especially common in people with diabetes. An over-the-counter cream or powder designed to treat yeast and fungal infections can be used for such infections, Pandit says.

If you are uncertain regarding the cause of a rash, or if the rash is persistent, consult a physician, Pandit advises.

E-mail Ven Griva at ven.griva@copleynews.com or write to P.O. Box 120190, San Diego, CA 92112.

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