

Do well at school to avoid heart disease later, research shows

July 7 2011

Students who leave school without any qualifications can expect to suffer from poorer health and greater risk of heart disease than those with some qualifications, according to new research.

However, the study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), suggests if they return to [education](#) later on in life they may be able to reduce the health gap with their more educated [peers](#).

Professor Tarani Chandola, from The University of Manchester, carried out the research on the data of 4,311 British adults born in 1958 for the ESRC-funded International Centre for Lifecourse Studies in Society and Health.

Men and women who leave school without any qualifications, he added, may be able to 'catch up' with their more qualified peers in terms of a lower risk of coronary [heart disease](#).

Around 14% of adults, he found, went on to obtain some qualifications between the ages of 23 and 42.

Men who left school without any qualifications had a 4% risk of heart disease in their 50's.

However, those who left school without any qualifications but who obtained some qualifications later on - usually an 'O' level equivalent - had a lower risk of heart disease of around 3%.

There were similar, although smaller, effects among women.

Professor Chandola said: "Health inequalities are a major concern in the UK and elsewhere.

"While there has been a great deal of attention paid to the importance of having a good start in life, we also need to think about what we can do to improve the health of adults who haven't had the best start to their lives."

He added: "Although this study does not prove that returning to education as an adult automatically improves your health, we do provide some hope to many who leave school without any qualifications.

"Apart from personal, social and economic benefits to returning to education as an adult, there may be [health](#) benefits as well."

More information: The paper 'Is adult education associated with reduced coronary heart disease risk?' is published by the *International Journal of Epidemiology*.

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Do well at school to avoid heart disease later, research shows (2011, July 7) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-07-school-heart-disease.html>

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