

Good health helps grades when students hit puberty

August 29 2012, by David Pittman



Good health helps children with stressful transitions from elementary school to middle school, finds a new study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. Students with chronic conditions such as asthma, obesity, learning disabilities, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and those with health-related needs, were noted to have lower academic performances.

"Most parents don't know how tough that transition really is," said lead author Christopher Forrest, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania [School](#) of Medicine. "When kids leave elementary school healthy, they're more likely to be good learners in middle school."

Forrest's research group sought to identify how health-related factors

affected school outcomes over time. Their research tracked more than 1,000 fourth, fifth and sixth graders from 2006 to 2008 in Maryland and West Virginia, noting [chronic health conditions](#), whether or not the child had gone through puberty, and the presence of health assets such as physical comfort, balanced nutrition and low negative stress. School outcomes such as grade point average and attendance were compared.

Children with fewer health conditions and who reported more health assets had higher GPAs. Puberty was associated with missing more days of school and poorer school outcomes. However, the presence of more health assets tended to buffer the negative effects of puberty. The study also linked a child's [life satisfaction](#) and connection to others, including teachers, to school success. "There is a dynamic association between achieving in school and feeling satisfied and happy with life," Forrest said.

The transition into adolescence is a time of real vulnerability, commented Jane Mendle, Ph.D., assistant professor of [clinical psychology](#) at Cornell University. Certain problems faced by children during this stage—especially health issues—are amplified.

"It's not that their obesity gets worse. It's not that their [learning disability](#) gets worse," Mendle said. "What's really the problem are the social repercussions of having that difficulty."

Parents, teachers and schools need to better help the students who may have particular trouble during this time. "It should be important to be aware of children that come into adolescence with a particular issue to help them through the transition," Mendle said.

More information: Christopher B. Forrest, et al., Health and School Outcomes During Children's Transition into Adolescence, *J Adolesc Health* (2012), [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.06.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.06.019)

Provided by Health Behavior News Service

Citation: Good health helps grades when students hit puberty (2012, August 29) retrieved 7 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-good-health-grades-students-puberty.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.