

Home visits during pregnancy and beyond may give poor kids a boost

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Better focus and stability noted in families seen by nurses and other trained caregivers, study finds.

(HealthDay)—Poor children get intellectual and behavioral benefits from home visits by nurses and other skilled caregivers, new research suggests.

The study included more than 700 poor women and their children in Denver who enrolled in a non-profit program called the Nurse-Family Partnership. This national program tries to improve outcomes for first-born children of first-time mothers with limited support.

The goal of the study, which was published online recently in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, was to determine the effectiveness of using trained "paraprofessionals." These professionals did not need college preparation and they shared many of the same social characteristics of

the families they visited.

The women in the study were divided into three groups. One group received free developmental screening and referral for their child. A second group received the screening plus a paraprofessional home visit during pregnancy and the child's first two years of life. Women in the third group received the screening plus a nurse home visit during pregnancy and the child's first two years of life.

Compared to those in the first group, children visited by paraprofessionals made fewer errors on tests of visual attention and task switching at age 9. Kids visited by nurses had fewer emotional and behavioral problems at age 6, fewer internalizing and attention problems at age 9, and better language skills.

As the program is tested in new trials throughout the United States and elsewhere, "it will be important to determine whether it is particularly successful in reducing disparities in health, achievement and economic productivity among [children](#) born to mothers who have limited psychological resources and who are living in severely disadvantaged neighborhoods," said study author David Olds, of the University of Colorado, Denver.

"This will enable policy makers to focus [Nurse-Family Partnership] resources where they produce the greatest benefit," Olds said in a journal news release.

More information: Here's where you can learn more about the [Nurse-Family Partnership](#).

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