

Income tied to health and life expectancy

April 15 2015

Americans at all income levels are less healthy than those with higher incomes. Not only is income associated with better health, but wealth affects health as well. Though it is easy to imagine how health is tied to income for the very poor or the very rich, the relationship between income and health is a gradient: Discrepancies exist at every level of the economic ladder.

Released this month, a pair of issue briefs examines the connections between [income](#) or wealth and health, and reviews policies that show promise in promoting health and economic well-being.

For those with lower incomes or less wealth:

- Life is shorter: At age 25, Americans in the highest incomes can expect to live more than six years longer than those living in poverty.
- Health is poorer: More than one in 20 (6 percent) adults who earn at least \$100,000 per year report being in poor or fair health, but the rate jumps to nearly one in 10 (9 percent) for those earning \$50,000-75,000 per year, and to almost one in four (23 percent) for those with annual incomes below \$35,000.
- Costly chronic disease is more common: Diabetes, for example, occurs in 6 percent of families who earn at least \$100,000 per year but is almost twice as common (11 percent) in families that earn less than \$35,000 per year.
- Emotional well-being is compromised: Compared with people in families earning more than \$100,000 per year, those earning less

than \$35,000 per year are four times more likely to report being nervous "all or most of the time" and five times more likely to report being sad "all or most of the time."

Policies with the strongest evidence for supporting both income and [health](#) and well-being include those that:

- Invest in early childhood to improve children's lifelong trajectories.
- Provide income support or in-kind benefits.
- Invest in the living conditions of entire neighborhoods or communities.

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

Citation: Income tied to health and life expectancy (2015, April 15) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-04-income-tied-health-life.html>

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