

Maybe you can forecast your health better than a doctor

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Results of self-rating study predicted which participants would catch a cold.

(HealthDay)—How you rate your health could predict your risk of getting a cold, a new study suggests.

Psychologists from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh had 360 healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 55 complete a simple self-assessment. The results accurately predicted their susceptibility to the [common cold](#).

The findings suggest it may be helpful for doctors to ask patients to rate their own [health](#), according to the research team.

"Poor self-ratings of health have been found to predict poor health trajectories in older adults, including an increased risk for mortality," said study leader Sheldon Cohen, a professor of psychology at the

university.

Cohen said the link was significant even after accounting for the effects of objective indicators of health such as physical examinations, medical records and hospitalizations.

"We wanted to examine whether self-rated health predicted effective [immune response](#) in younger adults selected for their [good health](#) and whether this association was dependent on [health practices](#) and socioemotional factors," he said in a university news release.

After completing the self-rating, the volunteers were exposed to a [cold](#) virus and monitored for five days. About one-third of them developed colds. Those who rated their health as fair, good or very good were more than two times as likely to develop a cold as those who rated their health as excellent. None of the participants rated their health as poor.

While the researchers only found an association, and not a cause-and-effect link, between self-rated health and risk of a cold or other infections, this association may be due to subtle sensations, feelings or symptoms that signal immune system problems, Cohen suggested.

"There are some things that we know about our bodies that aren't easily detectable by our physicians," he said.

The study was published in the November-December issue of the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians offers advice for [maintaining your health](#).

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