

History of chicken pox may reduce risk of brain cancer later in life

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The chicken pox is one of those pesky illness that affects kids and pains their parents, but it may offer some positive health benefits later in life, experts believe – a reduced risk for developing glioma.

In one of the largest studies to date, an international consortium led by

researcher in the Dan L Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center at Baylor College of Medicine reported an inverse relationship between a history of chicken pox and glioma, a type of [brain cancer](#), meaning that children who have had the chicken pox may be less likely to develop [brain cancer](#).

The Baylor team led by Dr. Melissa Bondy, a McNair Scholar and associate director for cancer prevention and population sciences at Baylor, and Dr. E. Susan Amirian, assistant professor in the Duncan Cancer Center at Baylor, reported their results in the journal *Cancer Medicine*.

In the study, the team reviewed information from the Glioma International Case-Control Study is a large, multi-site consortium with data on 4533 cases and 4171 controls collected across five countries.

They found a 21 percent reduced risk of developing glioma with a positive history of chicken pox. Furthermore, they identified the protective effective was greater in higher grade gliomas.

The large study validates earlier studies showing this link, Bondy said. "It provides more of an indication that there is some protective benefit from having the chicken pox," she said. "The link is unlikely to be coincidental."

In the future, scientists may be able to apply the [chicken pox](#) vaccine to brain [cancer](#) research.

More information: E. Susan Amirian et al. History of chickenpox in glioma risk: a report from the glioma international case-control study (GICC), *Cancer Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1002/cam4.682](https://doi.org/10.1002/cam4.682)

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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