

Australia's longest-running women's health study to add children's data

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Mothers taking part in the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health will provide fresh insights into their children's health and development. Credit: University of Queensland

Research linking two decades of data on Australian women with outcomes for their children will provide an unparalleled insight into child health and development.

Professor Gita Mishra from The University of Queensland said the [Mothers and their Children's Health Study \(MatCH\)](#) would help complete the picture on the health and development of Australian [children](#) and provide a substantial basis for strategies and services to

improve outcomes.

Professor Mishra said researchers were inviting up to 10,000 [mothers](#) to provide information on about 12,500 children aged 12 and under.

"These women, born between 1973 and 1978, were recruited into the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) in 1996," Professor Mishra said.

"That means we have years of data before their children were born, including on their physical and emotional health, health behaviours and risk factors, time use and socio-demographic factors.

"The MatCH study will allow us to investigate more thoroughly factors which may affect [child health](#) and development by linking that long-term research on their mothers with survey data on their children."

The first round of surveys will be sent to mothers in the coming weeks, inviting them to complete information for children aged under 13 years.

"The survey will ask about a range of important factors, including diet, physical activity, sleep patterns, growth milestones, social and emotional [development](#) and use of childcare and health services," Professor Mishra said.

"It will also drill down to provide data on specific factors that are now of interest to researchers, policy makers and health professions, such as screen time and the size of yards.

"Information we collect will then be linked to records from the Australian Early Development Census, NAPLAN and the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

"This will support a more integrated approach to primary [health](#) care for Australian families, as well as more targeted preventative strategies."

Professor Mishra said data collected from both mothers and children participating in the study was de-identified to protect their privacy.

"We are tremendously grateful to these women for sharing not only their own stories but now those of their children as well," Professor Mishra said.

"Their participation is making a real difference to the lives of Australian families now and into the future."

Provided by University of Queensland

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