

Close bond between kids, parents has long-term health benefits

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(HealthDay)—A strong and loving bond with parents may help protect

kids' health for decades, a new study suggests.

A well-off home also benefits their long-term health, but only if children also have a warm and healthy relationship with their [parents](#), the Baylor University study found.

"Previous research has associated high socioeconomic status with better childhood nutrition, sleep, neighborhood quality and opportunities for exercise and development of social skills. But good parent-child bonds may be necessary to enforce eating, sleep and activity routines," researcher Matthew Andersson said in a university news release. Andersson is an assistant professor of sociology in Baylor's College of Arts & Sciences, in Houston.

In 1995, he asked more than 2,700 adults between the ages of 25 and 75 how their parents had treated them during childhood. Roughly a decade later, almost 1,700 participants completed follow-up surveys, allowing Andersson to examine their health during middle-age.

His conclusion: Childhood abuse or mistreatment offsets the health advantages of growing up in a well-off home.

The benefit of strong parent-child bonds may also be undermined by low socioeconomic status, the study found. Previous studies have suggested that parents with less education and financial security are more apt to use force or threats with their kids, which may weaken the bond between them.

Children who are mistreated or lack warm relationships with their parents also have higher rates of inflammation and disease as adults.

Andersson said children in strained or abusive homes may also lack regular meal times, increasing the likelihood they will eat sugary or high-

fat snacks instead of healthy foods.

They are also less likely to have regular sleep and activity schedules that would help them develop habits that are important for healthy aging, according to the study.

It was published Sept. 20 in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

"Much research continues to view socioeconomic status and parent-child bonds as highly related or even interchangeable. But in fact they may quite independently influence a child's well-being," Andersson said.

"The key takeaway is that without adequate parent-child relationship quality to match, socioeconomic advantage during childhood may not offer much protection at all against major chronic disease as children become adults and reach middle age," he said.

More information: Purdue University provides more information on [parent-child relationships](#).

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