

Study finds exposure to racism harms children's health

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New research to be presented at the 2017 Pediatric Academic Societies 2017 Meeting illustrates the unhealthy effects racism can have on children, with reported exposure to discrimination tied to higher rates of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression, as well as decreased general health.

Authors of the study abstract, "The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination in the United States," will present their findings on Sunday, May 7, in the Moscone Covention Center West in San Francisco. For the study, they looked at data from 95,677 participants in the 2011-12 National Survey on Children's Health. In addition to providing physical and mental health data, caregivers of [children](#) in the survey were asked whether the child had experienced being "judged or treated unfairly" because of his or her race or ethnicity.

After adjusting for socioeconomic status, family structure, primary language and other factors, the researchers found a significant link between exposure to racism and health. The average proportion of children reported by parents to be in "excellent health" decreased by 5.4 percent among those exposed to perceived discrimination, for example. Exposure to racism also appeared to boost the odds of ADHD by 3.2 percent.

The biggest reduction in general health appeared among low-income, minority children, particularly Hispanic participants, said Ashaunta Anderson, MD, MPH, lead author of the study abstract and Assistant

Professor of Pediatrics at the University of California, Riverside.

Some children exposed to discrimination who were from high-income households, however, also experienced [negative health effects](#).

"White children with high income who experienced racial or [ethnic discrimination](#) had larger decreases in general health," Dr. Anderson said, "while black children experiencing that combination of factors had increased rates of ADHD."

The study also found that children who experienced [racial discrimination](#) had twice the odds of anxiety and depression compared to children who did not experience discrimination. In turn, children with anxiety or depression had roughly half the odd of excellent [general health](#), and four times the odds of ADHD.

"Our findings suggest that racial discrimination contributes to race-based disparities in child health, independent of socioeconomic factors," Dr. Anderson said, adding that coordinated efforts are needed to support children affected by discrimination with developmentally appropriate coping strategies and systems of care. In particular, she said, programs that provide positive parenting practices training and promote positive peer and role model relationships can help buffer children from the negative health effects of [discrimination](#).

Dr Anderson will present the abstract, "The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination in the United States," from 12:35 to 12:50 p.m. in conference rooms 2005-07.

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