

Home-schoolers see no added health risks over time

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Laura Kabiri. Credit: Jeff Fitlow/Rice University

Years of home-schooling don't appear to influence the general health of children, according to a Rice University study.

A report by Rice kinesiology lecturer Laura Kabiri and colleagues in the Oxford University Press journal *Health Promotion International* puts forth evidence that the amount of time a student spends in home [school](#) is "weakly or not at all related to multiple aspects of youth [physical health](#)."

"Although there may be differences in the [health](#) of elementary through [high school](#) home-schoolers, those differences don't seem to change with additional time spent in home school," Kabiri said. "In other words, staying in home school longer isn't related to increased [health benefits](#) or deficits."

Earlier this year Kabiri and her Rice team reported that home-schooled students who depended on maintaining [physical fitness](#) through outside activities were often falling short.

The flip side presented in the new report should come as good news to parents and students. The study was conducted by Kabiri and colleagues at Texas Woman's University and the University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHealth) at San Antonio.

The results from studies of more than 140 children in grades kindergarten through 5, who were tested against statistically normal data

for children of their age and gender, accounted for prior published research that showed home-schooled children have less upper-body and abdominal muscle strength and more abdominal fat when compared to public school students. Additional studies also showed that home-schooling benefited sleep patterns, overall body composition and diet.

However, to the researchers' surprise, these differences in home-schooler health did not appear to be affected either way by increased time in home school.

"Body composition can relate to sleep as well as diet," Kabiri said. "And as far as muscular health goes, these kids are still active. We're not saying there's not an upfront benefit or detriment to their health, but after an initial gain or loss, there aren't additional gains or losses over time if you're going to home-school your children for one year or their entire careers. The relationship between their health and the time they spend in [home](#) school seems to be irrelevant."

More information: Laura S Kabiri et al, Youth physical health and years in American homeschools: are they related?, *Health Promotion International* (2019). [DOI: 10.1093/heapro/daz047](https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daz047)

Provided by Rice University

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