

Positive experiences can protect children's heart health

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Credit: Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels

Experiencing childhood adversity can harm a child's heart health but positive experiences provide a buffer, according to a new study.

The research, led by Murdoch Children's Research Institute and [published](#) in the *International Journal of Cardiology*, found [adverse experiences](#) negatively impact childhood [cardiovascular health](#) yet positive ones had a beneficial effect and could prevent some of the damage caused by adversity.

For the study, data was sourced from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), which tracked 5,107 babies from birth up to age 12.

It found [childhood adversity](#) experienced from birth to 11 years, such as experiencing [domestic violence](#) and parental mental health illness, could lead to poor cardiovascular health later in childhood. Conversely, positive experiences like warm parenting and living in a safe living environment were linked to better heart health.

Positive experiences may also help explain why some children thrive among adversity, acting as a buffer to some of the possible negative effects on cardiovascular health.

MCRI's Dr. Jun Guo said the findings highlighted the importance of early life experiences to children's cardiovascular health, particularly the protective role of positive experiences.

He said public health programs, which focused on prevention and used evidence-based approaches, were needed to support all children and families. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide, responsible for about one third of all deaths.

"Promoting positive childhood experiences such as building healthy and safe communities, fostering strong family bonds and enhancing school and community engagement, are crucial to preventing future [cardiovascular disease](#)," Dr. Guo said.

"This research shows that by investing in the early years, we can have healthier futures for all Australian children."

More information: Shuaijun Guo et al, The effects of adverse and positive experiences on cardiovascular health in Australian children, *International Journal of Cardiology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ijcard.2024.132262](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijcard.2024.132262)

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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