

Frequent house moves during childhood ups risk of subsequent poor health

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Frequent house moves during childhood seem to increase the risk of poor health in later life, suggests research published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

The researchers assessed the health of 850 people, taking part in the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study. This has tracked the [long term health](#), based on postcodes, of those aged 15, 35, and 55 in 1987/8 over a period of 20 years.

The analysis included physical health, such as weight, waist: hip ratio, [lung function](#) and [blood pressure](#); overall health-meaning a limiting long term illness and subjective assessment of general health; psychological health; and unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking and heavy drinking or illicit drug use.

One in five people had lived at the same address throughout childhood; six out of 10 (59%) had moved once or twice; and a further one in five (21%) had moved at least three times.

Those in single parent/step parent households and those with two or three siblings were significantly more likely to move home. But those with at least four siblings were more likely to stay put during childhood.

There was no obvious association between parental housing tenure or social class and an increased number of moves.

There was no association between the frequency of house moves and [physical health](#) measures.

But frequent house moves during childhood were associated with an increased risk of poorer overall health, psychological distress, and heavy drinking and smoking during adolescence and adulthood.

And while some of these effects may be attributable to moving schools, which may disrupt

family life and social networks more than a house move alone, this was not the case for the risk of illicit drug use, say the authors.

Illicit drug use during adolescence and adulthood was independently associated with the frequency of house moves during childhood, even after taking account of parental background and levels of affluence and the number of school moves.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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