

Kids health outcomes have more to do with parents level of education than income

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Parents educated beyond high school invest more in family health care, reducing the likelihood of adverse medical conditions despite differences in family income and health insurance, according to a recent Rutgers study that appeared in the *Southern Economic Journal*.

The study, led by Alan Monheit and Irina Grafova, at Rutgers School of Public Health, examined the association between parental education and family health care [spending](#) in single-mother and two-parent families based on data from the 2004 to 2012 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS).

They found that parental education beyond 12 years is associated with increases in family health care spending and decreases in specific health conditions and poor health status, including hypertension, diabetes, and asthma.

According to Monheit and Grafova, higher [parental education](#) was associated with increased total [health care spending](#) on both children and parents, and was also associated with sizable increases on ambulatory care spending for both family types.

For instance, compared to single-mother families in which a mother lacks a [high school](#) diploma, single-mother families in which a mother is college educated spend an additional \$1,000 annually toward family ambulatory health care.

The study also found that families headed by single mothers who had higher levels of education spent more for prescription drugs and dental care while two-parent families with more education spent more for dental care and mental health services.

"Our study confirms the important association between the educational attainment of parents and the family's access to and use of [health care services](#)," said Monheit.

The study's findings support the well-established "Grossman model of health demand," in which health is a "good" that is inherited and increased by investments beyond the price of medical care, and depreciates over time as someone's health naturally deteriorates over time. This study thus supports the critical association between education and monetary investments in health.

More information: Alan C. Monheit et al, Education and family health care spending, *Southern Economic Journal* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/soej.12300](#)

Provided by Rutgers University

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