

[IMAGE]

The Adult Consequences of Childhood Heart Risks

By Editorial Staff

High blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and smoking – three heart risk factors we can often modify by behavior changes such as better diet, stress reduction, regular exercise and smoking avoidance / cessation. That's the good news; the bad news is that these risk factors can be present in children, and the consequences in adulthood may be significant and include health conditions you wouldn't expect.

Heart disease, stroke and various cancers have all been linked to the above heart-risk factors, but if children / teens display these factors, they may experience midlife declines in memory and learning equivalent to an additional six years of aging, according to research published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. Among more than 3,500 children, ages 3-18 at study entrance and tracked for more than 30 years until midlife, subjects with high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels and/or who smoked during childhood were more likely to have diminished memory and learning as assessed when they reached middle age. The more risk factors during childhood, the greater the risk of cognitive decline, according to the study.

Unhealthy habits start younger and younger these days, and as research such as this study suggests, the consequences can last a lifetime. Teach your children that the health behaviors you teach and the health choices they make truly can make a difference, now and in the future.

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