

[IMAGE]

Fitter Kids Are Smarter Kids

By Editorial Staff

Are fitter kids smarter kids? At least when it comes to cognitive skills at an early age, suggests new research. In a study designed to assess the potential correlation between cardiorespiratory fitness and cognitive test performance among preschoolers, children (ages 4-6) who walked farther than similarly aged children on a timed test (used to estimate cardiorespiratory health) also performed better on cognitive tests. Research findings appear in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*.

Children completed a six-minute walking test to assess cardiorespiratory fitness and were administered several tests of cognitive function, including the Woodcock Johnson Early Cognitive and Academic Development Test (a test of academic abilities); and modified Eriksen "flanker, hearts and flowers task" and "auditory oddball task" to assess cognitive control.

The Woodcock Johnson test assesses cognitive abilities via sentence repetition, sound blending, rapid picture naming, picture vocabulary, letter-word identification, and writing. The Eriksen tests assess cognitive control by determining a child's ability to accurately recognize congruency vs. incongruency [for example, if a picture of a heart or flower is on the left, select left (congruency) or right (incongruency); or whether a fish in a row of fishes is going in one direction vs. the opposite direction]. The auditory oddball task assesses children's ability to recognize rare or "oddball" sounds within a pattern of identical sounds.

[kids exercising - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark](#) Study co-author Shelby Keye, a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, summarized the research team's study findings in a press release by the school: "Preschool children with higher estimated cardiorespiratory fitness had higher scores on academic ability tasks related to general intellectual abilities as well as their use of expressive language. They had better performance on computerized tasks requiring attention and multitasking skills, and they showed the potential for faster processing speeds and greater resource allocation in the brain when completing these computerized tasks."

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