

Bachelor's degree boosts health, CDC report suggests

By Ryan Jaslow

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(CBS News) Higher education could help people in more ways besides finding a job. A new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found educated Americans are less likely to be obese and suffer from chronic diseases, compared to those with less education.

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[Obesity to affect 42% of Americans by 2030 with \\$550 billion in costs, say researchers](#)

The CDC's [National Center for Health Statistics](#) released its 35th annual report on health in the United States on Wednesday, which compiled data from government and private sector resources on Americans' health habits.

This year's edition spotlighted the role socioeconomic status has in determining a person's health. It found between 2007 and 2010, heads of households with a bachelor's degree or more were less likely to have obese children, with rates around 11 percent for boys and 7 percent for girls. Meanwhile, in households where the head holds a high school education or less, 24 percent of boys and 22 percent of girls were obese.

But what about the adults themselves? Twenty-five percent of women 25 and older who hold a bachelor's degree were obese, compared with 39 to 43 percent of women who had less education. In 2010, 31 percent of U.S. adults with a high school diploma or less were smokers, compared with 9 percent of adults who graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher.

According to the report, on average in 2006, 25-year-old men without a high school diploma had a life expectancy 9.3 years less than those with a bachelor's degree or higher, while women without a high school diploma had a life expectancy 8.6 years less than those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

"Highly educated people tend to have healthier behaviors, avoid unhealthy ones and have more access to medical care when they need it," the report's lead author, Amy Bernstein, a health services researcher for the National Center for Health Statistics, told [USA Today](#). "All of these factors are associated with better health."

People with less education are also less likely to have health insurance or good access to health care, Bernstein told [HealthDay](#). Rates like these aren't exactly new either - previous CDC reports have also found health disparities related to levels of income and education.

"It's frustrating to the public health community that this is not changing. We want to eliminate health disparities," she said.

The report also found half of adults over 18 fail to meet federal recommendations for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity, with older adults less likely to exercise than their 18-24 counterparts.

The CDC's full report, "[Health, United States, 2011](#)" can be found [here](#).

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