

How fathers' health impacts on children

SMOKING

Preconception

Fathers' preconception smoking can lead to a reduction in the number of sperm, their motility, and functionality

Antenatal

Fetal exposure to parental smoking has cumulative effects on birth outcomes: preterm birth, fetal growth restriction, low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, neurodevelopmental and behavioural problems, obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, impaired lung function, asthma, and wheezing

Early years

Important risk factors for young children's rapid (and unhealthy) weight gain are the father's smoking and his being overweight

Primary school

Father's smoking at any period from pre-conception onwards is correlated with childhood cancer (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia)

Secondary school

A review found adolescent smoking uptake more likely when their father is a smoker

ALCOHOL

Frequent binge drinking by a father just before conception correlates with lower Key Stage 2 test scores in their children

More or less equal association between measures of both alcohol consumption and alcohol problems in fathers and mothers during pregnancy, and symptoms of early childhood hyperactivity

Fathers' alcohol problem at this age is associated with lower paternal sensitivity, lower mood, lower positive engagement with child, and less sensitive responses during father-child play interactions - associated with higher risk for infant attachment insecurity with fathers

Children <10 are twice as likely to experience truancy, absenteeism, and suspension from school if their father is a problem drinker

Exposure to fathers' problem drinking at this time increases depression in both boys and girls, and increases anxiety in girls

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FOOD & EXERCISE

Preconception

Researchers have found a relationship between fathers' pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI) and sons' and daughters' bone mineral content and density

Antenatal

High BMI in fathers during pregnancy is associated with high BMI in their 7 year old children

Early years

The three main risk factors for childhood obesity are large infant size at birth, child being unfit, and child having an obese father

Primary school

Fathers' dietary intake and parenting style when their children are in primary school predict children's dietary intake and eating behaviours

Secondary school

Fathers' active participation in organised leisure-time physical activity and reaching 10,000 steps per day significantly reduces the odds of overweight / obesity in their adolescent children

MENTAL HEALTH

Fathers' prenatal mental health is associated with behavioural disorders in their children at ages 3 and 7 years

Paternal antenatal depressive symptoms are associated with high levels of emotional and behavioural problem trajectories in offspring 3.5 - 16 years, with persistent paternal depression most damaging

Fathers' depression in the postnatal year is associated with higher depression scores in sons and daughters at ages 9-11 and with poorer school outcomes at age 16

Children aged 11 living with a father who has depression are more likely to develop depression and not achieve educational milestones, compared to children who live with a parent who has a history of depression (but no active depression during child's lifetime) and compared to those living with a parent without depression

Paternal depression at this time is associated with adolescents' depression and anxiety, and with negative parenting by the father of his teenager: hostility towards them, time (not) spent with them, conflict with his child's mother, harsh parenting and low levels of warmth