

# **The Intergenerational Transmission of Health in Early Childhood**

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## **Abstract**

The prevalence and importance of child physical health problems have been increasingly recognized in recent years. Physical health problems of children, such as obesity, lead directly to adult physical health problems, which cause social costs. While the economics literature recognize that physical health problems can impede children's human capital formation over the whole life cycle, the link between physical health of parents and children's physical health in early childhood has received little attention. This paper examines the intergenerational transmission of parental physical health and the physical health of their children in Germany. We investigate this issue using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), in particular we make use of new data from the mother and child questionnaires. We focus on the intergenerational transmission of both, maternal and paternal physical health on child's physical health. We examine the intergenerational transmission of health within early childhood. The early childhood is recognized as the most important stage in life cycle for skills and health formation in life. Furthermore, we examine a range of parental and child health measures, which cover subjective and objective measures. We do include indicators on parental health behaviour, like smoking. Finally, in order to take into account the endogeneity of parental physical health, we estimate fixed effect models. Overall, we find, controlling for parent's income, education and family composition, that parents who experience poor health have significant poorer health children on average. For example, mother's and father's body mass index (BMI) are significant predictors for children's BMI and weight. Moreover, children from obese fathers are significantly heavier.