

Association of Cardiorespiratory Fitness Levels During Youth with Health Risk Later in Life

Researchers have recently discovered further connections between children's cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) and consequential health risks later in life. In studying this phenomenon, the team reviewed over 55 studies that observed 37,563 youths altogether. Ultimately, the results demonstrated that parents must pay greater attention to their child's heart health early on, as it may reduce the risk of significant medical complications as they mature.

Childhood CRF and the Improvement of Future Health

In a 2020 review on child healthcare, researchers learned that helping your child maintain positive CRF during their developmental years (ages 3-18) can markedly improve their health as they age. This study represents the first in-depth look at how preventative care can influence individuals' physical condition into adulthood. Thus, it provides substantial advancement for medical professionals caring for patients with congenital conditions like ventricular septal defect and atrial septal defect.

These two are of great concern in the context of cardiorespiratory health, particularly due to the following symptoms:

- **Ventricular septal defect (VSD):** Instead of the heart distributing oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body, this blood is pumped back into the lungs. This condition causes breathlessness or shortness of breath.
- **Atrial septal defect (ASD):** This is when the heart suffers from a hole in the septum (the wall between the heart's upper chambers). It presents a significant risk to lung health and typically causes shortness of breath. This symptom is much more pronounced during exercise.

Specifically, this review illustrated that positive CRF during childhood significantly reduced the likelihood of a child's or adolescent's chances of developing obesity or cardiometabolic disease as they age. The researchers followed up with participants one year after the initial examination to verify this, yet noted that these improvements are not permanent, dissipating after the first year.

How to Boost Your Child's CRF

Some of the best ways to protect your child's CRF now and into the future include:

- **Aerobic exercises such as dancing**
- **Jump rope and other fun cardio activities**
- **Sports such as basketball and soccer**
- **Running**

Speak to your pediatrician to develop a plan for strengthening your child's CRF, especially if they live with congenital heart diseases like ventricular septal defect or atrial septal defect.