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Temperament and Pain Reactivity Predict Health Behavior Seven Years Later

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► Abstract

Objective Minor illnesses and major diseases are affected by individual, environmental, and social factors. We sought to determine if children's temperament and pain reactivity (individual response styles) measured in kindergarten are related to future health behavior. **Methods** Seven-year follow-up measures of health behavior were gathered in 42 children (mean age $M = 11$ years) who participated in a previous study of pain reactivity and somatization. Current health behavior was compared with children's pain reactivity and temperament measured in kindergarten. **Results** Pain reactivity in kindergarten was associated with children's self-reports of somatization 7 years later, independent of their temperament. Temperament was related to children's self-reports of somatization and to maternal reports of health care utilization and


psychosocial health status. **Conclusions** Early response styles (i.e., heightened pain reactivity and difficulty adjusting) may indicate risk for increased health care utilization and poorer health and well-being later in childhood.


Key words: child; health; pain; somatization; temperament.

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