

Educational Attainment and Health Behavior Profiles of U.S. Young Adults

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We documented health risk behavior clustering among US young adults and assessed the extent to which educational attainment was associated with the clusters using data from Wave IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). We performed latent class analysis on 8 health risk behaviors, documenting clustering of behaviors separately by gender. Subsequently, we estimate the associations between educational attainment and the health risk behavior clusters, controlling for confounders. Thirteen percent of women grouped into the most favorable cluster, while 21% grouped into a high-risk cluster. A larger percentage of young men (31%) grouped into the highest risk cluster. Educational attainment associations with the clusters were strong, particularly for women. Substantial fractions of low educated young adults have unhealthy behavior profiles. Public health efforts to improve health among young adults should focus particular attention on clustering of health risk behavior, especially among low educated individuals.

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