

Don't delay school for summer-born or premature kids: study

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Holding children back linked to lower scores on standardized tests later

(HealthDay)—Delaying the start of school for a year for children with summer birthdays or those born prematurely may lead to worse academic performance later, new British research suggests.

"Our study shows that delaying school entry has no effect on Year 1 teacher ratings of [academic performance](#). But it is associated with poorer performance in age-standardized tests of reading, writing, mathematics and attention as the children get older," the study's corresponding author, Professor Dieter Wolke, from the Department of Psychology at the University of Warwick, said in a university news release.

Due to the study's design, the researchers can't say that delaying the start

of school was what caused poorer performance later, only that there was a link between these factors.

The study was published recently in the *Journal of Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*.

In conducting the study, the researchers examined data on nearly 1,000 children from the Bavarian Longitudinal Study in German. Of these children, 472 were born prematurely. The researchers pointed out that Bavarian policy requires all children to be assessed by a community pediatrician three to 12 months before they start school to determine their readiness.

The researchers compared the ratings the children received from their teacher during their first year in school as well as their scores on standardized math, reading, writing and attention tests by the time the children were 8 years old.

"Many parents demand that [preterm children](#) should be held back, particularly if they were born in the summer. This is also supported by many charities supporting parents with preterm children," the study's co-author, Julia Jaekel, from the Department of Developmental Psychology at Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany said in the news release.

The hope is that the delay will give these children more time to mature, and that waiting will help them do better in school.

"However, we found missing one year of learning opportunities was associated with poorer average [performance](#) in standardized tests at 8 years of age for both pre-term and full-term [children](#). Future research is needed to determine the long-term effect of delayed [school](#) entry on academic achievement, but our results certainly give parents and educational providers food for thought," she added.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics provides more information on how to determine if a child is [ready for school](#).

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