

Early life exposure to measles and later-life outcomes: Evidence from the introduction of a vaccine

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Until the mid-1960s, the UK experienced regular measles epidemics, with the vast majority of children being infected in early childhood. The introduction of a vaccine substantially reduced its incidence. The first part of this paper examines the long-term human capital and health effects of this change in the early childhood disease environment. The second part investigates interactions between the vaccination campaign and individuals' endowments as captured using molecular genetic data, shedding light on complementarities between public health investments and individual endowments. We use two identification approaches, based on the nationwide introduction of the vaccine in 1968 and local vaccination trials in 1966. Our results suggest that exposure to the vaccination in early childhood positively affected adult height, but only among those with high genetic endowments for height. We find no effects on years of education; neither a direct effect, nor evidence of complementarities.