

"Long before it's in the papers"

[RETURN TO THE WORLD SCIENCE HOME PAGE](#)

---

## Mom's hugs in youth may help keep doctor away later

May 18, 2010

Courtesy Nature Publishing Group  
and World Science staff

**While poverty has been associated with higher risk for illnesses, receiving plenty of maternal warmth during childhood might help lower this risk, a new study reports.**

The research appears this week in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*.

Warmth and caring from a person's mother appears to reduce the formation of protein molecules that promote inflammation in tissues of the body, said the authors, Edith Chen of the University of British Columbia, Canada, and colleagues.

Excessive or chronic inflammation is in turn implicated with mental and physical illnesses such as major depression and cardiovascular disease.

For the study, Chen and colleagues recruited 53 adults who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds early in childhood, with no significant differences in current demographic or behavioral factors. The researchers tested patterns of immune system activation and inflammation in the circulatory systems of these people. They were also asked about their early relationship with their mothers; their parents were called to confirm their childhood socioeconomic status.

The 26 participants who described their mothers as warm and caring were shown to have reduced inflammatory profiles compared with the other 27 participants, Chen and colleagues said.

These findings could be important for promoting supportive parental relationships as a means of helping to reduce the negative medical consequences of poverty, according to the researchers. They added that this could also lead to future research into the ways that early childhood experiences affect inflammatory molecular pathways into adulthood.