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# The Impact of Education on Health Outcomes and Behaviors in a Middle-Income, Low-Education Country\*

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## Highlights

- The 1997 education reform increased the middle school completion rates in Turkey.
- Extended primary schooling had differential effects on male and female health outcomes.
- Men who earned at least a middle school diploma experienced an increase in obesity.
- Extended schooling led women to maintain a healthy bodyweight.

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Although the impact of education on health is important for public policy everywhere, the overwhelming majority of research identifying the health returns to education has focused on developed countries. We use data from multiple waves of nationally-representative Health and Tobacco Surveys in Turkey, and exploit an education reform that increased the mandatory years of schooling from 5 to 8 years in 1997. Using exposure to the reform as an instrument for completing at least eight years of schooling, we examine the impact of education on health indicators and smoking among young adults. We find that extending schooling on this margin impacts men and women differently. Our results indicate that while a one-year of

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