CRITICAL PERIODS DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

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Abstract
We identify the ages that constitute sensitive (or critical) periods in children’s development towards their adult health status, skills, and human capital. For this we use data on families migrating into Sweden from countries that are poorer, with less healthy conditions. Late-life health is proxied by adult height and other adult outcomes. The relation between siblings’ ages at migration and their adult outcomes allows us to estimate the causal effect of conditions at specific childhood ages. We effectively exploit that for siblings the migration occurs simultaneously in calendar time but at different developmental stages (ages). We find evidence that the period just before the puberty growth spurt constitutes a critical period for adult height and we find related critical periods for adult cognition, mental health, and education. (JEL: I10, I12, I18, F22, I20, I30, J10)

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