

Study: Southern kids are sicker than most

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A University of Florida study suggests children living in the South are up to three times more likely to battle poor health than other U.S. children.

"Hurricane Katrina gave the world a glimpse of the disparities in the South," said Dr. Jeffrey Goldhagen, the study's lead author and an associate professor of community pediatrics. "Our research documents just how profoundly these disparities impact the health of children in the region."

Goldhagen said the study is the first to statistically relate region of residence to measures of child health.

"In fact, we now believe that where a child lives may be one of the most powerful predictors of child health outcomes and disparities," he said.

The poor health outcomes researchers documented included low birth weight, teenage pregnancy, death and other problems such as mental illness, asthma, obesity, tooth decay and school performance.

The study was recently published in the journal *Pediatrics*.

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