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# Email Alert

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Updating you about current events in the battle against addictions

## Positive Parenting More Powerful Than Genetic Risk for Substance Use

According to a new study from the University of Georgia, high levels of involved and supportive parenting can neutralize at least one genetic predisposition to substance use. The study, published in the February issue of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, followed a group of youth over time in order to see how genetics and environment interact to influence substance use behavior.

Previous studies have shown that variations in the gene known as 5HTT, which is involved in the transport of the brain chemical serotonin, are associated with greater risk of substance use as well as with higher levels of risk taking and impulsive behavior. In this study, researchers completed interviews and genetic testing of more than 250 African American families from rural Georgia. They found that 40% of the youth had the genetic variation associated with greater risk of substance use. Interview data showed that substance use was low among younger participants but increased with age. By age 14, 21% had smoked cigarettes, 42% had used alcohol and 5% had used marijuana.

Among youth with the genetic risk factor, those with low levels of parental involvement and support increased their substance use at a rate 3 times that seen among youth with high levels of parental involvement and support. Among youth with high levels of parental support, rates of substance use were the same regardless of genetics. According to one of the authors, "...in families that were characterized by strong relationships between children and their parents, the effect of the genetic risk was essentially zero...." Along with other studies, the findings from this study suggest that helping families to become more resilient could be a powerful tool in combating risk factors for substance use. Examples of parental involvement and support include regularly communicating and spending time with your children as well as helping with day to day needs like homework.

Source: [http://www.uqa.edu/news/artman/publish/090210\\_GeneticRisk.shtml](http://www.uqa.edu/news/artman/publish/090210_GeneticRisk.shtml)

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