

## **Childhood Immunization, Mortality and Human Capital Accumulation**

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### **Abstract**

In the mid-1980s, the Indian government embarked on one of the largest childhood immunization programs-called “Universal Immunization Program” (UIP)-in order to reduce the high mortality and morbidity among children. I examine the effect of this immunization program on child mortality and educational attainment by exploiting district-by-cohort variation in exposure to the program. Results indicate that exposure to the program reduced infant mortality by 0.4 percentage points and under-five child mortality by 0.5 percentage points. These effects on mortality are sizable-they account for approximately one-fifth of the decline in infant and under-five child mortality rates between 1985-1990. The effects are more pronounced in rural areas, for poor people, and for members of historically disadvantaged groups. While the program clearly reduced mortality, it had mixed effects on children's educational outcomes. I find it had a negative impact on primary school completion, but a positive impact on secondary school completion. The negative effect at low levels of schooling may be due to lower average health among marginal surviving children or resource constraints faced by the government where investments in child health programs may have crowded out investment in school infrastructure and quality. The greater propensity to complete secondary school on the other hand may be due to improved health among those farther away from the margin of survival.