

A Note from Our Co-Principal Investigator

Dear Project Viva Community,

Over the course of the fall, Project Viva investigators and research staff have been busy on many fronts. Just as many of you are, we have been going “back to school,” entering the new academic year and adjusting to this new normal.



First, our amazing operations team has put everything in place to welcome participants back into our research office ([401 Park Drive in Boston](#)). We know that safety is at the forefront of everyone’s minds and we have been taking extra precautions to maintain the health of our participants and staff. We have implemented advance screening, PPE use, social distancing, and cleaning and disinfecting procedures for these in-person visits. And, of course, we are always happy to complete visits at your homes, or on the phone/online including all possible remote visit components. We love to see you and hear from you – in person or any other way!

Thanks to many of you, Project Viva has contributed to a nationwide effort by the ECHO Program (Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes) to understand the impact of the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic on families and young adults in the US. Thank you again to all of you who answered the COVID-19 survey this past spring and summer. The preliminary results will soon be available, and we plan to share these with you in an upcoming Viva Views newsletter. As the situation continues to evolve in the coming months, we will reach out again to learn more about your life and experiences through the fall and winter. This brief upcoming “winter” survey will also inquire about a few new things, such as how to connect dads and other parents with Project Viva (explained in the “Coming Soon” section below).

As part of the scientific team leading Project Viva, Emily Oken (PI), myself, and many other key Viva co-investigators are starting to plan and imagine the next phase of Project Viva. We have many great ongoing projects focused on better understanding women’s health as the mothers we enrolled during pregnancy are now entering mid-life. Moreover, we are using feedback from focus groups we conducted with Viva teens to envision the scientific questions related to health in young adulthood that will be part of the next visit. As a research team, we are very excited to plan and think about young adult health, and for me, this brings back a life stage that I have

always been passionate about, and a focus on [my very first research project](#) about how to promote healthy lifestyles in university students.



We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MF Hivert".

Marie-France Hivert, co-PI of Project Viva

Coming Soon: Young Adulthood and a Renewed Focus on Viva Moms...and Other Parents!



As Project Viva wraps up the Mid/Late Teen visit and enters its third decade, we are thinking ahead to what is next. We are very excited to announce that we have received new grant funding from the National Institutes of Health that will allow us to continue examining how health evolves across the generations. Our plans include:

- ***Ongoing follow-up with Viva Moms:*** We will launch a new visit next year, which will include some things we have collected for many years, as well as new elements to better understand moms' health before, during, and after menopause. Some of the new elements include activity monitors for sleep; brain MRI scans; and computerized memory tests.
- ***Ongoing follow-up with Viva Young Adults:*** We hope to keep in touch with the Viva kids – now young adults – even as they graduate high school, college and begin to live on their own. We will be testing new online and smartphone-based data collection tools.
- ***New – more Viva Parents!*** Up until now, Project Viva has collected information only from Viva moms and kids. We have heard many times over the years that fathers and other parents have felt a bit left out. So finally, we are preparing to collect some information from them! But first, we need to know how to reach them. In an upcoming

questionnaire, we will be asking both moms and young adults for their contact information so that we can reach out to them directly. We realize that Viva young adult participants may have different types of relationships with biological fathers, as well as other parental figures. We would appreciate receiving the biological father's contact information to request information about his health and background. If the Viva young adult has another parent who has been like a father (stepfather, adoptive father, etc.), we would also like to contact them to learn more about their background, because we know that genetics are not the only influences on health and development. Similarly, we would also welcome contact information for same-sex or non-male-identifying partners of Viva moms who have been parental figures in our young adult participants' lives. Please note that providing this information will not enroll the father/parent in Project Viva or in any way obligate them to participate; it will just allow us to contact them and invite them to be part of the study. If dads or other parental figures decide to join Project Viva, we plan to collect some information that will help us conduct more interesting and informative research about influences on health across the life course. We will be asking for this contact information in our upcoming winter questionnaire. Both young adults and moms will have these questions on their questionnaire, and it is fine if you both provide the same information! Please reach out to the Project Viva staff if you have any questions about our plans!



WHAT PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING ABOUT PROJECT VIVA

"The researchers are serious about the science and have a way of making us feel like a welcome part of their work."

"We have always found the staff a pleasure to work with and very responsive. My daughter and I are pleased to be able to contribute for the greater good, and the results (and tests, visits, and questionnaires) over the years have been interesting."

"Thank you as always for all that you do. This cohort study is so important and I'm proud to have participated for the past 20+ years!"



We Asked, You Shared, and We Listened!

Earlier this year, we distributed a survey that gave our participants the opportunity to share with us how to improve their overall Project Viva experience. Thanks to the hundreds of responses from our committed participants, we are gaining a better understanding of how to improve scheduling and completing our visits. In response, we created an abbreviated in-person visit to decrease the time commitment, we are going to include more graphics in our communications, and we will share the important scientific research findings that our participants help us discover. We always welcome feedback – if there is something we missed, please reach out to us at project_viva@hphc.org, anytime!



Recent Project Viva Findings: You Don’t Want to “Sleep” on These!



Sleep is important for healthy development, especially for young children. It has been hypothesized that a child’s sleep can be disrupted when their mother experiences stress, even if that stress occurred during pregnancy. Project Viva investigators studied whether a mother’s experiences of racial discrimination before and during pregnancy can affect the sleep behaviors of her infant. [This analysis, published in the *Sleep Health journal*](#), included data from 552 Project Viva mothers who self-identified as women of color. Investigators found that mothers who reported experiencing racial discrimination in three or more places (e.g. at work, getting medical care, getting service in stores) had

babies with shorter sleep duration from six months through two years when compared to mothers who reported “no” to all questions. They also found that racial discrimination of any amount and in any form was associated with shorter sleep duration at 6 months compared to no racial discrimination. The investigators concluded that maternal experiences of racial discrimination are associated with shorter sleep duration especially for young infants.



Another study addressed how sleep habits could be affecting teens’ health. Using data from Actigraph sleep monitors, dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scans, and questionnaires, [Project Viva investigators published new research findings on this topic](#). This study focused on a central question: “How does a teen’s natural body clock (“chronotype”), and the difference between this natural preference and when they have to be awake for school and other activities (“social jet lag”) affect their body composition and metabolism?”

The analysis for this study was performed from the data on 804 Project Viva teens between the ages of 12 and 17 who attended Viva Early Teen visits between January 2012-October 2016. Investigators found that—when adjusted for age, puberty, season, and other characteristics—chronotype and social jet lag showed no associations with markers of metabolism. However, there was an association with body fat mass and distribution that varied based on sex. Girls who were more likely to be “night owls” and with a larger social jet lag had higher waist circumference and total fat mass measurements. On the other hand, no similar associations were seen among boys. These findings led Viva Investigators to conclude that keeping a proper and consistent sleep schedule could be particularly useful in obesity prevention in adolescent girls.

Thank you for reading!



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