

# Health Risk Perception, Optimistic Bias, and Personal Satisfaction

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**Objectives:** To examine change in risk perception and optimistic bias concerning behavior-linked health threats and environmental health threats between adolescence and young adulthood and how these factors related to personal satisfaction. **Methods:** In 1996 and 2002, 1624 adolescents responded to a mailed questionnaire. **Results:** Adolescents showed strong positive optimistic bias concerning behavior-linked risks, and this optimistic

bias increased with age. Increase in optimistic bias over time predicted increase in personal satisfaction. **Conclusions:** The capacity to process and perceive potential threats in a positive manner might be a valuable human ability positively influencing personal satisfaction and well-being.

**Key words:** optimistic bias, risk perception, health-related behaviors, personal satisfaction, adolescents

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