

People with kids half as likely to develop colds due to 'psychological benefits of parenthood'

- **The more children you have the better your chance of escaping coughs and colds**

You may think parents couldn't escape from picking up bugs due to the constant stream of virus-ridden children traipsing through their homes. However, scientists have discovered they are actually very adept at batting off illness.

A study from Carnegie Mellon University has found that parents are 52 per cent less likely to develop a cold than those with no off-spring.

Plus they found the more children you have the stronger the effect. While parents with one or two children were 48 per cent less likely to get sick, those with three or more children were 61 per cent less likely to develop a cold.



Less common than you'd think: Parents seem to have a psychological advantage over non-parents when it comes to battling colds

Surprisingly the scientists don't think this is because parents have immune systems that have been strengthened by constant viral attacks. Instead it comes down to 'mental toughness.'

This explains why parents with children living at home and away from home showed a decreased risk of catching a cold.

Study author Professor Sheldon Cohen, said: 'Although parenthood was clearly protective, we were unable to identify an explanation for this association.

'Because we controlled for immunity to the virus, we know that these differences did not occur just because the parents were more likely to have been exposed to the virus through their children.

'Moreover, parents and nonparents showed few psychological or biological differences, and those that did

exist could not explain the benefit of parenthood.

'We expect that a psychological benefit of parenthood that we did not measure may have been responsible.'

For the study, Professor Cohen and his team exposed 795 healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 55 to a virus that causes a common cold.

Participants reported their parenthood status, and analyses were controlled for immunity to the experimental virus, viral strain, season, age, sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, body mass, employment status and education.

Overall non-parents were half as likely to develop colds than parents.

Professor Cohen said: 'We have had a long-term interest in how various social relationships influence health outcomes.'

'Parenthood was especially interesting to us because it has been proposed that it can have both positive and negative effects on health. For example, being a parent can be stressful but at the same time can be fulfilling, facilitate the development of a social network and provide purpose in life.'