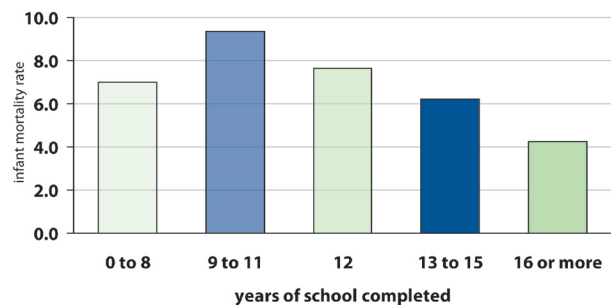


The week of April 7 has been designated **National Public Health Week** by the American Public Health Association (<http://www.nphw.org/nphw08/default.htm>). This weeklong event provides a good opportunity to highlight the important role education plays in affecting our health status.

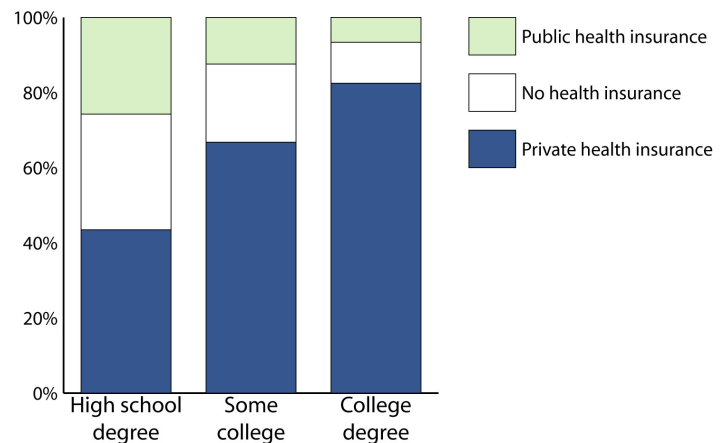
### Consider some of the facts:

- Only 8 percent of individuals with no more than a high school diploma self-assess their health status as *excellent* compared to 21 percent of those who have a college degree.
- Someone who drops out of high school has a life expectancy that falls 2.5 years short of average life expectancy.
- Children born to mothers who have some college education have two-thirds the mortality rate of children born to mothers who have dropped out of high school.
- If you hold only a high school degree, you are more than twice as likely to smoke as someone who graduated from college.
- Obesity, hypertension and diabetes rates fall as educational attainment rises.
- More than one-half of the children born in Tennessee in 2005 were on TennCare, the state's public health insurance system.
- People who hold a college degree are almost twice as likely to have private health insurance than their counterparts who hold only a high school diploma.

Infant mortality rate by maternal educational attainment



Private insurance and educational attainment



Does education alone produce these outcomes? Probably not. But better educated individuals do typically hold higher paying jobs that offer greater access to health insurance and quality health care. Moreover, the same individuals may be more cognizant of the health consequences of important lifestyle choices, like the decision to smoke or not.