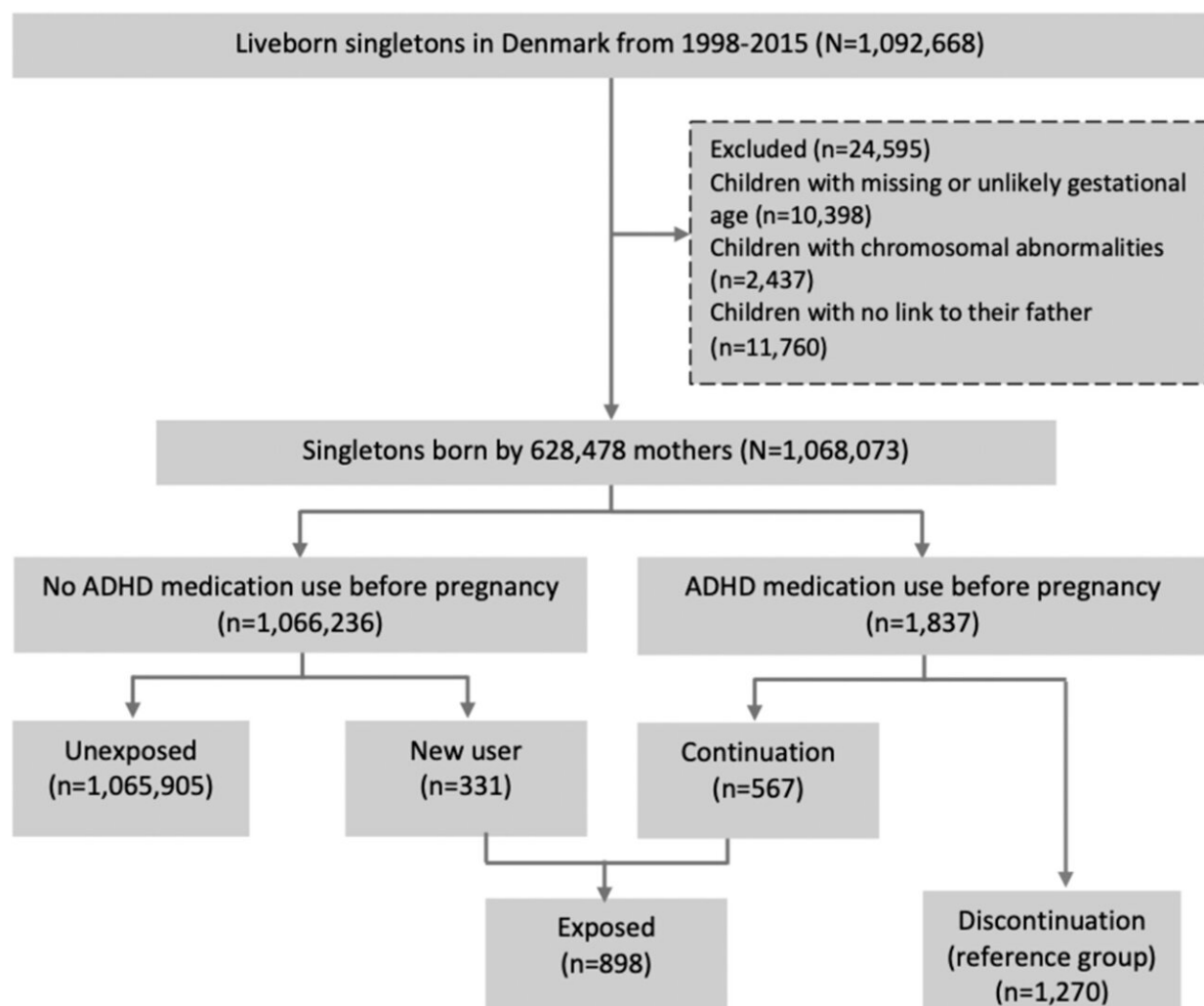


# Study: Pregnant women on ADHD medications shouldn't worry about pediatric neurodevelopmental disorders

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Credit: *Molecular Psychiatry* (2023). DOI: 10.1038/s41380-023-01992-6

Women around the world who have taken medication to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) during their pregnancy can now breathe a sigh of relief. There are no differences in rates of neurodevelopmental disorders between children who were exposed and those who were unexposed to stimulant medication in-utero, according to new research conducted by research conducted by the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York and Aarhus University in Denmark and published February 9 in *Molecular Psychiatry*.

This study on ADHD [medication](#) during [pregnancy](#) is the first to examine long-term neurodevelopment after prenatal exposure to stimulants. The researchers Icahn Mount Sinai and the Center for Register Research at Aarhus University examined more than 1 million children born between 1998 and 2015 in Denmark and followed through 2018.

They identified almost 900 children whose mothers either continued treatment with ADHD medication throughout pregnancy or started on ADHD medication during pregnancy, and 1270 children whose mothers stopped taking ADHD medication before pregnancy. They found no changes in the likelihood of developing a neurodevelopmental disorder among children who were exposed to ADHD medication during their mothers' pregnancy.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 4% of women aged 15-44 years are using ADHD medication in the U.S., making these medications among most prescribed medications during pregnancy. Currently, there are no clinical guidelines in relation to pregnancy and ADHD medication, which poses a problem for psychiatrists, [general practitioners](#), midwives, nurses and other healthcare professionals who are tasked with advising women before conception or during pregnancy.

The researchers investigated whether the children in the study had developed neurological developmental disorders, including autism and ADHD, impaired vision or hearing, epilepsy, febrile seizures or growth retardation.

Previous animal studies and studies of illicit drug use in humans have shown that centrally stimulating drugs like methylphenidate and amphetamine, which are the most frequently used for ADHD, can pass to the fetus and have adverse effects. Therefore, it is important to know that no long-term adverse effects have been found so far in human children who were prenatally exposed to therapeutic doses of prescription stimulants is encouraging.

At the same time, the research team emphasizes that this study should be followed up by additional research, including inquiry into short-term outcomes, given that ADHD medication during pregnancy might be associated with other types of outcomes besides neurodevelopmental.

Veerle Bergink, MD, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry, and Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Science and Director of the Women's Mental Health Program at Icahn Mount Sinai, says, "We can see that the number of women of childbearing age who are medicated for ADHD is rapidly increasing, and therefore it is very important to garner more knowledge to be able to counsel these women. We know that there is an increased risk of accidents or losing a job when women do not take ADHD medication, when it is indicated. There are still unknowns, but these results may contribute to women making informed decisions about using ADHD medication during pregnancy."

**More information:** Kathrine Bang Madsen et al, In utero exposure to ADHD medication and long-term offspring outcomes, *Molecular Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s41380-023-01992-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-023-01992-6)

Provided by The Mount Sinai Hospital

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