

# Childhood behavior linked to taking paracetamol in pregnancy

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Tylenol 500 mg capsules. Credit: Wikipedia

The research published today in *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* examined whether there were any effects of taking paracetamol in mid-pregnancy and the behaviour of the offspring between the ages of 6 month and 11 years, with memory and IQ tested up until the age of 17. Paracetamol is commonly used to relieve pain during pregnancy and is

recommended as the treatment of choice by the NHS.

Using questionnaire and school information from Bristol's Children of the 90s study researchers examined 14,000 [children](#). When they were seven months pregnant 43 per cent of their mothers said they had taken paracetamol 'sometimes' or more often during the previous three months. Researchers examined results of the children's memory, IQ and pre-school development tests, temperament and behaviour measures.

They found an association between paracetamol intake and hyperactivity and attention problems as well as with other difficult behaviours with young children that were not accounted for by the reasons why the medication was taken or social factors. However, this was no longer the case by the time the children reached the end of primary school. Boys appeared to be more susceptible than girls to the possible behavioural effects of the drug.

The study was led by Professor Jean Golding OBE who also founded the University of Bristol's Children of the 90s study. She commented:

"Our findings add to a series of results concerning evidence of the possible adverse effects of taking paracetamol during pregnancy such as issues with asthma or [behaviour](#) in the offspring. It reinforces the advice that women should be cautious when taking medication during pregnancy and to seek [medical advice](#) where necessary.

"It is important that our findings are tested in other studies—we were not in a position to show a causal link, rather an association between two outcomes. It would also be useful now to assess whether [older children](#) and adults are free of difficult behavioural problems if their mother had taken [paracetamol](#)."

**More information:** Associations between paracetamol

(acetaminophen) intake between 18 and 32 weeks gestation: a longitudinal cohort study by Jean Golding, Steven Gregory, Rosie Clark et al published in *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*

Provided by University of Bristol

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