

# Pregnant women with obesity and diabetes may be more likely to have a child with ADHD

September 8 2022

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Children of women with gestational diabetes and obesity may be twice as likely to develop attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

compared to those whose mothers did not have obesity, according to new research published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

The estimated number of children aged 3–17 years ever diagnosed with ADHD is 6 million, according to data from 2016-2019. A major risk factor for ADHD in children is maternal [obesity](#). Roughly 30% of women have obesity at their first doctor's visit during pregnancy, and this number increases to 47% in women with [gestational diabetes](#). Excessive weight gain during pregnancy in this population is a risk factor for children developing ADHD.

"Our study found [pregnant women](#) with obesity and gestational diabetes had children with long-term mental health disorders such as ADHD," said Verónica Perea, M.D., Ph.D., of the Hospital Universitari MutuaTerrassa in Barcelona, Spain. "We did not find this association when these women gained a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy."

The researchers studied 1,036 children born to women with gestational diabetes. Thirteen percent of these children were diagnosed with ADHD. The researchers found children of women with gestational diabetes and obesity were twice as likely to have ADHD compared to those born to mothers without obesity.

The researchers only found this association in women with gestational diabetes, obesity and [excessive weight gain](#) during pregnancy. The researchers did not observe a higher risk of ADHD in children of women with gestational diabetes and obesity if the amount of weight these women gained during pregnancy was within the normal range.

"It's important for clinicians to counsel their patients on the importance of healthy weight gain during pregnancy," Perea said.

**More information:** Verónica Perea et al, Role of Excessive Weight Gain During Gestation in the Risk of ADHD in Offspring of Women with Gestational Diabetes, *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* (2022). [doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgac483](https://doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgac483)

Provided by The Endocrine Society

Citation: Pregnant women with obesity and diabetes may be more likely to have a child with ADHD (2022, September 8) retrieved 3 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-09-pregnant-women-obesity-diabetes-child.html>

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