

Moms' depression in pregnancy tied to antisocial behavior in teens

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Children from urban areas whose mothers suffer from depression during pregnancy are more likely than others to show antisocial behavior, including violent behavior, later in life. Furthermore, women who are aggressive and disruptive in their own teen years are more likely to become depressed in pregnancy, so that the moms' history predicts their own children's antisocial behavior.

That's the conclusion of a new [longitudinal study](#) conducted by researchers at Cardiff University, King's College London, and the University of Bristol. The research appears in the January/February 2010 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The study considered the role of mothers' depression during [pregnancy](#) by looking at 120 British youth from inner-city areas. "Much attention has been given to the effects of postnatal depression on young infants," notes Dale F. Hay, professor of psychology at Cardiff University in Wales, who worked on the study, "but depression during pregnancy may also affect the unborn child." The youths' mothers were interviewed while they were pregnant, after they gave birth, and when their children were 4, 11, and 16 years old.

The study found that mothers who became depressed when pregnant were four times as likely to have children who were violent at 16. This was true for both boys and girls. The mothers' depression, in turn, was predicted by their own aggressive and disruptive behavior as teens.

The link between depression in pregnancy and the children's violence couldn't be explained by other factors in the families' environments, such as social class, ethnicity, or family structure; the mothers' age, education, [marital status](#), or IQ; or depression at other times in the children's lives.

"Although it's not yet clear exactly how [depression](#) in pregnancy might set infants on a pathway toward increased [antisocial behavior](#), our findings suggest that women with a history of conduct problems who become depressed in pregnancy may be in special need of support," according to Hay.

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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