

Teen moms more likely to have premature babies

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Pregnant women aged 14-17 years are at higher risk of preterm birth and of having a child with low-birth-weight, especially if they are having their second child. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* demonstrate this association and call for better health education and the promotion of contraception after a teenager has given birth for the first time.

Ali Khashan, from University College Cork, Ireland, worked with a team of researchers to study all 14-29 year-old women who had a live baby in the North West of England between January 2004 and December 2006. The researchers identified 3,636 people who were between 14 and 17 at the time of birth, 7,506 who were aged between 18 and 19, and 45,211 who were 20 to 29.

The rates of [teenage pregnancy](#) increased with increasing [social deprivation](#) such that more than one third of the teenage mothers came from the most socially deprived areas. Teenage mothers were more likely to be underweight and of white [ethnic background](#). Women who gave birth during the teenage years were at increased risk of preterm and very preterm delivery. This risk was higher for younger teenager mothers than for older teenagers and in the 14-17 group the risk was greater in second pregnancies than in first.

Speaking about the results, Khashan said, "It is possible that the increased risk of poor pregnancy outcome is related to biological immaturity. It is also possible that the increased risk of poor pregnancy

outcome in the second teenage pregnancy is related to numerous complicating factors such as greater social deprivation and less prenatal care."

Professor Kenny, a Health Research Board clinician scientist and consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Cork University Maternity Hospital, who led the study, said, "These results highlight the importance of ensuring pregnant teenagers have appropriate antenatal care. Moreover a vital component of this care is post-natal contraception to prevent a second teenage pregnancy with potentially higher risks of adverse outcomes. A first pregnancy may be the first and only time a pregnant teenager interacts with health services and this opportunity should not be overlooked".

More information: Preterm birth and reduced birthweight in first and second teenage pregnancies: a register-based cohort study, Ali S Khashan, Philip N Baker and Louise C Kenny, BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpregnancychildbirth/

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