

# Study finds pregnancy safe in multiple sclerosis

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Canadian researchers have found that maternal multiple sclerosis (MS) is generally not associated with adverse delivery outcomes or risk to their offspring. Full findings now appear in *Annals of Neurology*, a journal published by Wiley-Blackwell on behalf of the American Neurological Association.

MS is a chronic, inflammatory [neurologic disease](#) and the most common cause of non-traumatic neurological disability in [young adults](#) in the Western world. Nearly 75% of [MS patients](#) are women who often experience disease onset in [early adulthood](#)—a time when many consider starting a family. Prior studies report that up to one-third of women with MS bear children after disease onset, underscoring the need to understand the effects of maternal MS on pregnancy outcomes, which is the focus of the current study by Mia van der Kop, a member of the MS research group led by Dr. Helen Tremlett at the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute in Vancouver, Canada.

The research team analyzed data from the British Columbia (BC) MS Clinics' database and the BC Perinatal Database Registry between 1998 and 2009. Researchers identified 432 births to women with MS and 2975 to women without the disease, comparing gestational age, birth weight, type of birth (vaginal versus caesarean section). Age at MS onset, disease duration and level of disability were also examined.

Results showed that babies born to mothers with MS did not have a

significantly different mean gestational age or birth weight compared to babies born to healthy mothers. Mothers with MS were not more likely to have a vaginal delivery or C-section. Researchers noted that MS mothers with greater levels of disability had a slightly elevated risk of adverse delivery outcomes. This finding was not statistically significant and further investigation was suggested. Age at onset of MS and duration of disease were not linked to adverse delivery or neonatal outcomes.

"Our finding that MS was not associated with poor pregnancy or birth outcomes should be reassuring to women with MS who are planning to start a family," said Dr. Tremlett. The authors did note that MS mothers were more often overweight or obese, which is associated with greater risk during pregnancy and birth. Researchers suggest that these women be advised to optimize their weight prior to becoming pregnant. "The importance of body mass index and pregnancy-related outcomes in MS should be explored in future studies," M. van der Kop concluded.

**More information:** "Neonatal and Delivery Outcomes in Women with Multiple Sclerosis"; Mia L. van der Kop, Mark S. Pearce, Leanne Dahlgren, Anne Synnes, Dessa Sadovnick, Ana-Luiza Sayao and Helen Tremlett. *Annals of Neurology*; Published Online: June 27, 2011 ([DOI:10.1002/ana.22483](https://doi.org/10.1002/ana.22483)).

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