

Study shows protective benefits of DHA taken during pregnancy

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An Emory University study published online today in *Pediatrics* suggests consuming Omega 3 fatty acids during pregnancy helps protect babies against illness during early infancy.

The randomized, placebo-controlled trial followed approximately 1,100 pregnant women and 900 infants in Mexico. The women were supplemented daily with 400 mg of Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA) supplements in the algal form or placebo from 18 to 22 weeks gestation through childbirth.

Researchers found those whose mothers took DHA supplements had fewer colds and shorter illnesses at one, three and six months of age.

"This is a large scale, robust study that underscores the importance of good nutrition during pregnancy," says Usha Ramakrishnan, PhD, associate professor, Hubert Department of Global Health at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health. "Our findings indicate that [pregnant women](#) taking 400 mg of DHA are more likely to deliver healthier infants."

At one month of age, the infants in the DHA group experienced a reduced occurrence of cold symptoms by 25 percent, including a shorter duration of cough, phlegm and wheezing.

At age three months, the infants in the DHA group spent 14 percent less time ill.

At six months of age, infants in the DHA group experienced shorter duration of fever, nasal [secretion](#), difficulty breathing and rash, though longer duration of vomiting.

Ramakrishnan and her colleagues have previously reported findings that show offspring of women pregnant with their first child who received 400 mg DHA during pregnancy delivered babies who were 100 grams heavier at birth and 3/4 cm longer at 18 months of age.

The study, funded by the NIH and the March of Dimes Foundation, also found increased DHA levels in [breast milk](#). All of the [infants](#) participating in the study were breastfed.

Provided by Emory University

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