

# Group-based child care is linked to reduced emotional problems in children of depressed mothers

June 19 2013

---

Child care is linked to fewer emotional problems and symptoms of social withdrawal among children exposed to maternal depression, according to a new study of nearly 2000 children conducted by researchers in Montreal, Canada, at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and University of Montreal.

"We found that children exposed to [maternal depression](#) during the preschool years were nearly two times more likely to develop emotional problems and separation [anxiety symptoms](#). However, regular child care attendance of at least 8 hours per week was linked to a more positive outcome for these children, such as reduced chances of developing emotional problems and symptoms of [social withdrawal](#)" reported Dr. Catherine Herba, a researcher at Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center who is the lead author of the study, as well as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at UQAM, and affiliated with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Montreal.

Entering child care at a younger age (i.e. before 17 months of age) or later in the preschool period was associated with similarly [beneficial effects](#). Most importantly, it was not the intensity of exposure that was linked to lower levels of emotional problems, but rather the type of child care arrangement that proved most crucial, the key being regulated group-

based child care – either in a [family environment](#) or a daycare center. Child care arrangements with family members or babysitters, usually individual care within the child's home, were not associated with reduced risk of developing [emotional problems](#) in these children. "Further work needs to be done for us to understand the exact mechanisms responsible for this effect", Dr. Herba added. "However results clearly point toward the benefits of regulated group-based child care for children exposed to symptoms of maternal depression during their preschool years. This could be due to the more structured setting; care provided by trained professionals; the child being out of their home; or exposure to other children of a similar age."

Dr. Sylvana Côté, a co-author of the study, also noted that "it is important that we support young families, particularly those at risk, by providing access to quality child care services". Dr. Côté is also a researcher at Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center and associate professor in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Montreal.

**More information:** The study "Maternal Depressive Symptoms and Children's Emotional Problems Can Early Child Care Help Children of Depressed Mothers?" was published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry* on June 19, 2013.

Provided by University of Montreal

Citation: Group-based child care is linked to reduced emotional problems in children of depressed mothers (2013, June 19) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-06-group-based-child-linked-emotional-problems.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.