

# Children born to teen mothers have delayed development, likely due to social factors

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Babies born to teen mothers have less developed speaking skills at age five than children of older mothers, a new study has found.

"We don't believe that having a baby in your teens is the cause of underdeveloped speaking skills," said Dr. Julia Morinis, the lead author and researcher in the Centre for Research on Inner City Health of St. Michael's Hospital. "It's likely that being a teen mother is a risk factor that indicates poorer circumstance for development opportunities in some cases."

Dr. Morinis points to [teen mothers'](#) limited opportunities for education and well-paid jobs or single parenthood as social factors that have a significant negative impact on [childhood development](#).

"Most differences in non-verbal and spatial abilities between these two groups of [children](#) can be attributed to significant sociodemographic inequalities in circumstance," said Dr. Morinis. "But for verbal ability, there seems to be more going on."

The study, published online today in the journal *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, identified parenting involvement – such as playing, reading, and singing with the child – was predictive of higher-level [child development](#).

"In Ontario, we're fortunate to have free services like Early Years Centres that can help offset the effects of being born into a negative

social situation," said Dr. Morinis, who is also a staff physician at The Hospital for Sick Children.

Ontario Early Years Centres offer children up to the age of six and their caregivers opportunities to take part in programs and activities together. Early Years Centres, library programs or drop-in play programs are resources Dr. Morinis recommends to families that are concerned about increasing parenting involvement and improving child development.

The study used data from the Millennium Cohort Study, a long-term nationally representative study of almost 19,000 children born between 2000 and 2001 across Britain. These children were assessed for reasoning skills and intelligence when they were five years old.

More research is needed to more closely monitor and engage with families of young parents to determine the differences in their interactions and the child's abilities are.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

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