

Augmented labor during childbirth is not associated with increased odds of autism

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In a study to be presented on Feb. 5 in an oral plenary session at 8 a.m. PST, at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting, in San Diego, researchers will report that induced or augmented labor are not associated with increased odds of Autism spectrum disorder.

Autism spectrum disorder has increased in frequency over the last several decades and now affects one in 68 [children](#) in the U.S. Given the observed increase, there has been great interest in identifying potential risk factors. Previous research suggests that environmental factors during pregnancy and childbirth may increase the risk of ASD diagnosis in childhood. One environmental factor of interest is induction and/or augmentation of labor. Labor is induced (started) or augmented (helped along) for many reasons including medical indications and patient preference. Prior research has suggested a potential link between induction/augmentation of labor and ASD.

The study, titled Autism Spectrum Disorder and Induced/Augmented Labor: Epidemiologic Analysis of a Utah Cohort evaluated the association of ASD in a large group of Utah births that occurred between 1998 and 2006. Using data from birth certificates and from a registry of autism cases in Utah (Utah Registry of Autism and Developmental Disabilities), the researchers compared 2,547 children with ASD to 166,283 children without ASD. Children exposed to [labor induction](#) and/or augmentation did not have increased odds of ASD after adjusting for important factors such as socioeconomic status, maternal health,

pregnancy-related events and conditions, and year of birth. The results were the same for males and females.

"Induction/augmentation of labor is an important strategy to minimize risk to mother and baby in some situations," explained Erin A.S. Clark, M.D. one of the researchers of the study and the person who will present the results at the SMFM annual meeting. "The study reassures both patients and physicians that induction/augmentation of [labor](#) does not appear to be associated with [autism spectrum disorder](#) risk."

Provided by Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

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