

Popular media influences choice of childbirth

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Women's magazines influence whether women decide to have a more natural childbirth or not, with most of the messages biased towards promoting the benefits of medicalised birth.

Researchers from Monash University and Queensland University of Technology have studied how popular media influences [women's](#) choices for childbirth

The study, published in *Women & Health*, specifically aimed to assess the effect of communicating the benefits of more natural birth (e.g. no medical intervention such as epidurals or caesarean section).

Kate Young, lead researcher from Monash's School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, said popular media was biased towards promoting the benefits of medical intervention even in low risk births, despite evidence that it leads to preventable maternal and infant morbidity.

"We wanted to look at how women's decisions might be influenced by communicating the alternative benefits of non-medicalised birth," Ms Young said.

The researchers surveyed women aged 18 to 35 who had never given birth, and gave them [magazine](#) articles that promoted the benefits of a non-medicalised birth.

"Women's expectations and attitudes about birth are shaped by various sources of information long before they become pregnant, with one of the most popular being the media, and in particular, magazines," Ms Young said.

"We found that women who were exposed to a magazine article endorsing childbirth with no [medical intervention](#), were more likely to change their intention towards having a more natural birth."

Ms Young said the findings provided preliminary support for a social communications strategy to offset the current information bias towards a medicalised [birth](#), which could contribute to reducing the rates and dangers of medically unnecessary intervention for women having babies.

More information: "Keeping it Natural: Does Persuasive Magazine Content Have an Effect on Young Women's Intentions for Birth?" *Women Health*. 2015 May-Jun;55(4):447-66. [DOI: 10.1080/03630242.2015.1022690](#)

Provided by Monash University

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