

# At-risk children of mothers with bipolar disorder may benefit from early intervention

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A recent study examining the temperament and behavior of toddlers whose mothers have bipolar disorder shows that toddlers who struggle with frustration, restraint and negative emotions may be at increased risk for behavioral problems over time. The study was published in the

*Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology.*

"The examination of temperament and behavior in toddlers of mothers with bipolar disorder represents an important area of investigation," says Diana I. Simeonova, Dipl.-Psych., Ph.D., principal investigator of the study and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University School of Medicine. "Better understanding of early characteristics contributing to either well-being or mental illness in this high-risk population may aid in the development of early intervention and prevention approaches."

In this study, the Early Childhood Behavior Questionnaire and Child Behavior Checklist were used to assess the temperament of 30 toddlers between the ages of 18-36 months whose mothers have [bipolar disorder](#). The toddlers' mothers were asked to rate the frequency of temperament-related behavior observed over the previous two weeks on a scale from one (never) to seven (always).

Data from the parents' assessments indicate that in this population, toddlers with impairments in flexibility, frustration tolerance, restraint, soothability, daily rhythms, and [negative emotions](#) might be at an increased risk for behavioral and emotional problems over time, and should be monitored closely.

"Early in development, [toddlers](#) already demonstrate subtle temperament trait markers that may be linked to the emergence of later psychopathology or problems with adaptive functioning," write the researchers. "Although more studies are needed in this area, we believe that with temperament-based [early intervention](#) and prevention approaches, future emotional problems in high-risk children can be avoided."

Provided by Emory University

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