

# Longer estrogen exposure may protect against depression

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(HealthDay)—Women exposed to estrogen for longer periods of time

during the reproductive years may have a lower risk of depression, according to a study published online July 17 in *Menopause*.

Researchers included 1,306 regularly menstruating [premenopausal women](#), aged 42 to 52 years at study entry. The team collected data at baseline and annually for 10 years, focusing on duration of estrogen exposure (menarche to menopausal transition), duration of hormonal [birth control](#) use, pregnancies, and lactation.

This researchers found that longer exposure to estrogen was significantly associated with a reduced risk of depression during menopause and for up to 10 years after. The investigators also found that longer use of birth control was associated with a lower risk of depression, but the number of pregnancies or incidence of breastfeeding had no effect.

"This study additionally found a higher risk for depression in those with earlier [menopause](#), fewer menstrual cycles over lifespan, or more frequent hot flashes," JoAnn Pinkerton, M.D., executive director of the North American Menopause Society, said in a society news release.

"Women and their providers need to recognize symptoms of [depression](#) such as mood changes, loss of pleasure, changes in weight or sleep, fatigue, feeling worthless, being unable to make decisions, or feeling persistently sad, and take appropriate action."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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