

# NICU babies at risk for later mental health issues

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(HealthDay)—Survivors of the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) are

at an increased risk for psychiatric disorders during childhood and adolescence, according to a study recently published in *Archives of Disease in Childhood*.

Andreea Chiorean, from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and colleagues used data from the 2014 Ontario Child Health Study to assess the mental health of children and adolescents admitted to NICUs in infancy.

The researchers found that based on parent reports from 3,141 children, NICU graduates aged 4 to 11 years had an [increased risk](#) for any psychiatric disorder (adjusted odds ratio [OR], 1.78; marginal prevalence of 32.4 percent for NICU graduates versus 27.6 percent for controls). There was also an increased risk for psychiatric comorbidity (OR, 1.74), oppositional defiant disorder (OR, 1.48), attention-deficit/[hyperactivity disorder](#) (OR, 1.61), separation anxiety disorder (OR, 4.11), and specific phobia (OR, 2.13). For children aged 12 to 17 years, parent and self-report of any psychiatric disorder occurred in 40.5 and 30.5 percent of NICU graduates and 30.6 and 17.9 percent of controls, respectively. There was increased risk for psychiatric comorbidity (ORs, 1.64 and 1.74) and for oppositional defiant disorder (ORs, 1.89 and 3.17) by parent and self-report, respectively.

"Existing follow-up guidelines of preterm infants suggest monitoring for [mental health issues](#), and this study provides preliminary evidence that in the future it may be prudent to expand this to all infants who stay in a NICU regardless of birth weight status," a coauthor said in a statement.

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

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