

# Child developmental vulnerability up with maternal depression

August 17 2020

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(HealthDay)—Children exposed to maternal depression have an

increased risk for developmental vulnerability at school entry, with stronger associations for exposure to maternal depression before age 1 year and between ages 4 and 5 years, according to a study published online Aug. 17 in *Pediatrics*.

Elizabeth Wall-Wieler, Ph.D., from Stanford University in California, and colleagues examined the association between exposure to maternal depression before age 5 years and five domains of developmental vulnerability in a cohort study involving 52,103 children who completed the Early Development Instrument between 2005 and 2016.

The researchers found that compared with children not exposed to maternal depression before age 5 years, those exposed to maternal depression before age 5 years had a 17 percent [increased risk](#) for having at least one developmental vulnerability at school entry. The strongest associations were seen between exposure to maternal depression and difficulties in social competence, [physical health](#) and well-being, and emotional maturity (adjusted relative risks, 1.28, 1.28, 1.27, respectively). Exposure to [maternal depression](#) before age 1 year and between [ages](#) 4 and 5 years was most strongly associated with developmental vulnerability for most developmental domains.

"We are facing a public health crisis," write the authors of an accompanying editorial. "Maternal depression is widespread and not limited to the perinatal period. We have a role as pediatricians to work toward diminishing the deleterious effects of depression on mothers and their children."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)  
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Citation: Child developmental vulnerability up with maternal depression (2020, August 17)  
retrieved 27 April 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-child-developmental-vulnerability-maternal-depression.html>

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