

Study suggests no link between antiseizure drugs used in pregnancy and cognitive problems in babies

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New findings published in *JAMA Neurology* suggest there is no

difference in cognitive outcomes at age 2 among children of healthy women and children of women with epilepsy who took antiseizure medication during pregnancy. The findings are part of the large research project Maternal Outcomes and Neurodevelopmental Effects of Antiepileptic Drugs (MONEAD), which is a prospective, long-term study looking at outcomes in pregnant women with epilepsy and their children. The study was funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), part of the National Institutes of Health.

This study reports findings from 382 children (292 children born to women with epilepsy and 90 born to healthy women) who were assessed for language development at age 2. The researchers also compared developmental scores with third trimester blood levels of antiseizure medication in these children.

Results suggest that children born to healthy women and those born to women with epilepsy do not show significant differences in language development scores at age 2. Neither was [language development](#) linked to third trimester blood levels of epilepsy medications. Most women with epilepsy in the study were taking lamotrigine and/or levetiracetam.

However, the study did find that those children born to mothers with the very highest levels of antiseizure medication in the blood during the third trimester did have somewhat lower scores on tests in the motor and general adaptive domains, which refer to skills related to [self-care](#), such as feeding.

The children in this study will continue to be followed and will participate in additional cognitive tests through age 6. Results so far indicate that controlling epilepsy with these medications during pregnancy may be safe for babies.

More information: Kimford J. Meador et al, Two-Year-Old Cognitive

Outcomes in Children of Pregnant Women With Epilepsy in the Maternal Outcomes and Neurodevelopmental Effects of Antiepileptic Drugs Study, *JAMA Neurology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamaneurol.2021.1583](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaneurol.2021.1583)

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