

# Mothers' mental health may affect twins' and singletons' touch and movement during pregnancy

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A picture of twins from the Acta Paediatrica study taken around 1 month after birth. Credit: Dr. Reissland

New research published in *Acta Paediatrica* suggests that a pregnant

woman's mental health may impact the touch behavior of twins and singletons during pregnancy, and in the case of twins, how frequently they touch themselves and each other. Such touch behavior might be a soothing mechanism for fetuses when mothers are stressed or depressed during their pregnancy.

The study, which was based on ultrasound scans in 30 pregnant women, also found that maternal depression and stress affected the touch and movement behaviors of both singletons and twins, but with differences between the two.

"We already know that maternal mental health, specifically stress and depression, has an effect on fetal development. The findings from this [pilot study](#) offer a fascinating insight into the prenatal experience," said lead author Nadja Reissland, DPhil, of Durham University, in the UK. "More research needs to be done to create a toolkit of resources that will allow obstetricians, midwives, and [mental health](#) professionals to better support women throughout their pregnancies with care targeted at their healthcare needs."

**More information:** Nadja Reissland et al, Effects of maternal mental health on prenatal movement profiles in twins and singletons, *Acta Paediatrica* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/apa.15903](https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.15903)

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