# Higher maternal prenatal BMI may harm child cognition

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(HealthDay)—Higher maternal prenatal body mass index (BMI) may be

associated with poorer offspring brain development, according to a study published online Aug. 19 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Emily Oken, M.D., M.P.H., from Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues examined the associations for maternal prenatal BMI with cognition and behavior of offspring born full-term in a cohort study involving 11,276 children followed from birth (1996 to 1997) to adolescence (2017 to 2019).

The researchers found that each 5-unit increase in maternal late-pregnancy BMI was associated with a lower offspring Wechsler Abbreviated Scales of Intelligence (WASI) performance intelligence quotient (IQ; –0.52 points) at 6.5 years and lower scores on five of seven NeuroTrax subscales and the global cognition score at age 16 years (–0.67 points). After adjustment for sociodemographic characteristics, pregnancy complications, and paternal BMI, the results were similar and they were not mediated by child weight. Higher late-pregnancy maternal BMI was associated with more behavioral problems reported by teachers but not with parent-reported behaviors. Similar results were seen for maternal BMI measures in the first trimester or postpartum.

"The most clinically relevant implication of this analysis suggests that children born to women with obesity should be observed closely for neurodevelopmental problems and referred as appropriate for early intervention or other supportive services," the authors write.

**More information:** Abstract/Full Text