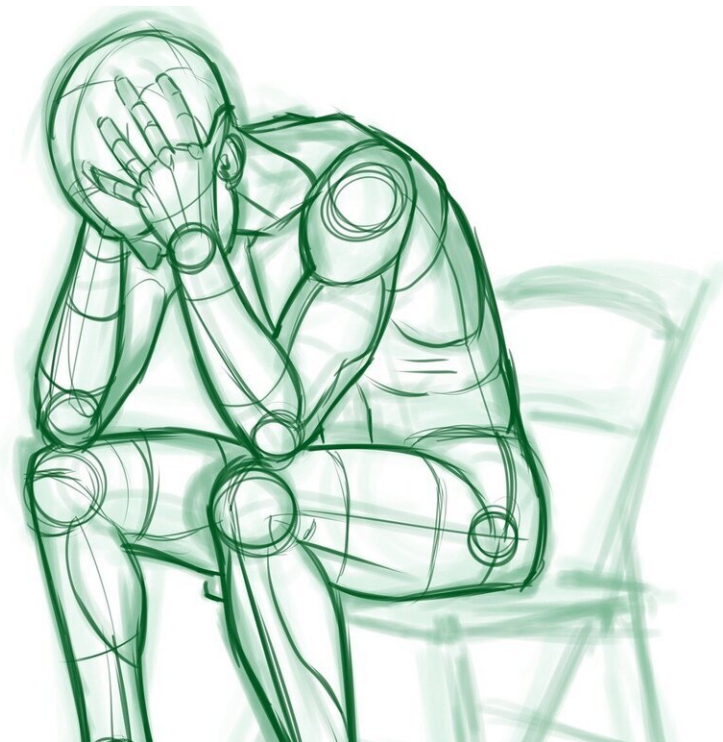


# 'Concerning' findings emphasize importance of depression screening

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University of Queensland researchers are calling for screening of perinatal depression (PND) for all women during pregnancy, after finding women with persistent depression are at high risk of developing the condition.

Ph.D. candidate Dr. Jacqueline Kiewa from UQ's Child Health Research Centre compared the perinatal experiences of women with lifetime [major depression](#) and found almost three quarters of them had at least one episode of PND.

"Of the 7,182 participants in the study, 5,058 (70 percent) experienced perinatal depression," Dr. Kiewa said.

Those who experienced perinatal depression—during pregnancy or within six months after giving birth—were more likely to experience severe, complex and frequent depressive episodes and earlier onset of symptoms.

"These women were more likely to have other psychiatric illness such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and respond less to anti-depressants," Dr. Kiewa said.

The research found they were also more likely to experience severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy.

Dr. Kiewa described the findings as concerning.

"In Australia, PND is a leading cause of disease in women who give birth and puts children at risk of developing cognitive and emotional problems," she said.

Dr. Kiewa said Australian women of non-European and Indigenous ancestry and those who have a history of trauma had a higher risk of PND.

"Some of the characteristics we identified suggest [environmental influences](#) as the cause of PND in women with depression, while others point to genetic and biological reasons that may be specific to women

and pregnancy," she said

"Very few PND studies have considered whether mothers have ADHD or other psychiatric illnesses."

"This is why it's important that perinatal depression screening be included in all perinatal examinations."

The research is published in the journal *BMJ Open*.

**More information:** Jacqueline Kiewa et al, Lifetime prevalence and correlates of perinatal depression in a case-cohort study of depression, *BMJ Open* (2022). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-059300](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-059300)

Provided by University of Queensland

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