

# Father's postpartum depression found to double child's odds of adverse childhood experiences before age 5

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A father's depression during his child's first year of life has been associated with difficulties in parenting and child behavior, but new

research finds that it also doubles the odds of a child having three or more adverse childhood experiences by age 5.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which include household dysfunction and child maltreatment, can have lifelong effects on children that include [health problems](#), poorer mental health, and lower school performance. The author of the abstract, "Paternal postpartum depression and children's [adverse childhood experiences](#) at age 5," will present additional preliminary findings during the [2023 AAP National Conference & Exhibition](#) at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

"Paternal depression is underdiagnosed, and pediatricians are in a unique position to link fathers to appropriate supports that can benefit themselves and their families," said author Kristine Schmitz, MD, assistant professor of Population Health, Quality Improvement and Implementation Science at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

She analyzed data on 1,933 father/child dyads from the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a national U.S. urban birth cohort. About 75% of the parents were unmarried. The study investigated associations between depression in fathers in the first year of their child's life and adverse childhood experiences when they transitioned into kindergarten.

Children had two times the odds of experiencing three or more adverse childhood experiences by the time they were 5 years old, a risk that went beyond sociodemographic factors and mother's postpartum depression, Dr. Schmitz said.

"These preliminary findings demonstrate a robust association between father's postpartum depression and later adversity for their children," she

said. "This suggests that fathers should be screened for depression and be offered treatment for their depression and that this may reduce the risk the hardships their children may later face."

**More information:** Abstract Title: Paternal postpartum depression and children's adverse childhood experiences at age 5.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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