

Study suggests maternal inflammation risk factors associated with children's behavioral and emotional regulation

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Maternal inflammation risk factors may be associated with dysregulation in children, according to a recent study. "Dysregulation" in this context

refers to children's attention, anxiety, depression, and aggression being measurably different from what is typically expected at their age.

While inflammation is a normal bodily response to injury or infection, ECHO investigators wanted to learn whether factors linked to inflammation during pregnancy might be associated with dysregulation in [children](#).

More youth with dysregulation (35%) were born to mothers with prenatal infections compared with 28% of youth without dysregulation. Other [maternal factors](#) studied, including being overweight before pregnancy, attaining less education, and smoking during pregnancy, were associated with higher likelihoods of childhood dysregulation. Children and adolescents who had a parent or sibling with a mental health disorder were also more likely to experience dysregulation.

"Addressing factors and treating conditions associated with behavior challenges may help improve outcomes for these children," said Jean Frazier, MD, of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School and a study leader.

Researchers used the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) to measure [aggressive behavior](#), anxiety/depression, and attention problems in children. Approximately 13.4 % of children and adolescents in the study met the criteria for the CBCL Dysregulation Profile.

This study included 4,595 participants (ages 6-18 years) from 18 ECHO research sites across the United States.

Dr. Frazier and Mike O'Shea, MD, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill led this [collaborative research published](#) in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

More information: Jean A. Frazier et al, Perinatal Factors and Emotional, Cognitive, and Behavioral Dysregulation in Childhood and Adolescence, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaac.2023.05.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2023.05.010)

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