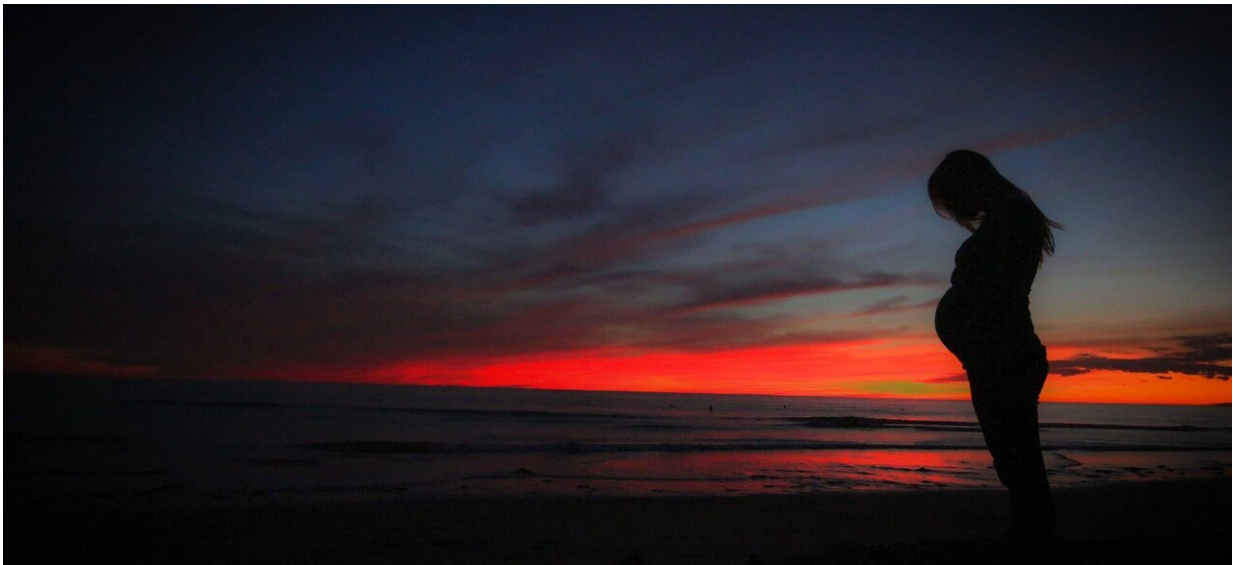


PTSD in pregnant women may affect the risk of ADHD in the child

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A comprehensive registry study led by Anna-Clara Hollander, associate professor at the Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, shows that children of women who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) right before or during pregnancy are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD later in life.

The [study](#) is published in the journal *European Psychiatry*.

Children of women diagnosed with PTSD right before or during their pregnancy are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than if the mother did not have a PTSD diagnosis. This is partly due to the fact that ADHD has a hereditary explanation and that ADHD itself is a risk factor for PTSD (in the mother), but also in parents who are not diagnosed with ADHD or mothers who do not have other types of mental illness, there is an association between PTSD in the mother during pregnancy and ADHD in the offspring.

If the research findings can be replicated in other countries, including sibling comparisons of both mothers (sisters) and children (siblings or cousins), screening and treatment of PTSD in [pregnant women](#) could be used to prevent ADHD in children.

The study is a register-based study of 553,766 [children](#) born in Sweden during 2006–2010. A limitation is that the researchers did not use a sibling design, so the findings could actually be due to a genetic link between PTSD and ADHD. However, they have tried to handle the genetic confounding by looking at the association in parents who are not diagnosed with ADHD and in mothers who did not have other [mental illness](#) than PTSD.

In the future, the researchers would like to study the association using a sibling design to investigate if it's explained by genetics. If not, they would like to examine whether evidence-based treatment of PTSD in women who are planning to become pregnant or are already pregnant would reduce the likelihood of ADHD in their offspring.

More information: Michael Borgert et al, Prenatal maternal PTSD as a risk factor for offspring ADHD: A register-based Swedish cohort study of 553 766 children and their mothers, *European Psychiatry*

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