

Inflammation in childhood linked to onset of mental health disorders

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Low-grade systemic inflammation across childhood and adolescence is associated with the subsequent onset of mental health disorders, according to a study [published](#) online Aug. 21 in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Edward R. Palmer, M.B.B.S., from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, and colleagues examined trajectories of inflammation, as measured by C-reactive protein (CRP), in [children](#) and adolescents using data from the U.K.-based Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children; inflammation was assessed at ages 9, 15, and 17 years. Data were included for 6,556 participants; outcomes were assessed at age 24 years.

The researchers identified three classes of inflammation: persistently low CRP levels (6,109 individuals) and persistently elevated CRP levels peaking at 9 years and 17 years (early peak, 197 individuals; late peak, 250 individuals). Compared with participants with persistently low CRP, participants in the early-peak group had an increased risk for psychotic disorder (odds ratio, 4.60), a higher risk for [severe depression](#) (odds ratio, 4.37), and higher Homeostasis Model Assessment scores ($\beta = 0.05$). No associations with outcomes were seen for the late-peak group.

"This study adds new information about the chronicity and timing of inflammation predating illness and provides insight into the co-occurrence of related cardiometabolic disorders," the authors write.

One author disclosed ties to the pharmaceutical and health care industries.

More information: Edward R. Palmer et al, Trajectories of Inflammation in Youth and Risk of Mental and Cardiometabolic Disorders in Adulthood, *JAMA Psychiatry* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.2193](#)

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