

[IMAGE]

## Better for Baby

By Editorial Staff

The research linking maternal health behaviors with child health – even well after birth – continues to amaze. The latest: a study that suggests pregnant women who can manage their stress, anxiety and depression better prepare their children for healthy cognitive development.

Key features of the fetal brain appear to be influenced by the expectant mother's well-being, particularly stress / anxiety / depression. Researchers used self-reported questionnaires between 24 and 40 gestational weeks to gauge maternal levels of these well-being variables; and validated scales and assessments 18 months after birth to assess child neurodevelopment.

According to study findings, "prenatal maternal stress was negatively associated with infant cognitive outcome." The researchers also note: "This finding is in keeping with results of previous studies showing cognitive impairments in children following early exposure to maternal stress."

However, they also note that stress / anxiety / depression during pregnancy are certainly not uncommon, so the takeaway is less "manage your stress, etc. while expecting" and more "recognize the potential connection between these variable and your baby's cognitive development."

In other words, if you're expecting a child and your well-being is suffering on any level (high levels of stress, anxiety and/or depression), make sure your health care team is on board with helping you find solutions that will benefit you and your baby.

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