

COVID-19 during pregnancy may increase obesity risk in children

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Children born to mothers who had COVID-19 during pregnancy may be more likely to develop obesity, according to a new study published online ahead of print in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology &*

Metabolism. It is titled, "Accelerated Longitudinal Weight Gain Among Infants with In Utero COVID-19 Exposure."

More than 100 million [COVID-19 cases](#) have been reported in the United States since 2019, and there is [limited information](#) on the long-term health effects of the infection. Pregnant women make up 9% of reproductive-aged women with COVID-19, and millions of babies will be exposed to maternal infection during [fetal development](#) over the next five years.

"Our findings suggest that children exposed in utero to maternal COVID-19 have an altered growth pattern in [early life](#) that may increase their risk of obesity, diabetes and [cardiovascular disease](#) over time," said Lindsay T. Fourman, M.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Mass. "There is still a lot of research needed to understand the effects of COVID-19 on [pregnant women](#) and their children."

The researchers studied ~150 infants born to mothers who had COVID-19 during pregnancy and found they had lower birth weight followed by greater weight gain in the first year of life as compared to ~130 babies whose mothers did not have prenatal infection. These changes have been associated with an increased risk for obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in childhood and beyond.

"Our findings emphasize the importance of long-term follow-up of children exposed in utero to maternal COVID-19 infection, as well as widespread implementation of COVID-19 prevention strategies among pregnant individuals," said Andrea G. Edlow, M.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital. "Larger studies with longer follow-up duration are needed to confirm these associations."

More information: Accelerated Longitudinal Weight Gain Among Infants with In Utero COVID-19 Exposure, *Journal of Clinical*

Endocrinology & Metabolism (2023).

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