

Benzodiazepine exposure in pregnancy does not up risk for ADHD, autism

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Benzodiazepine exposure during pregnancy seems not to be associated

with increased risks for development of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a study published online Nov. 22 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Vincent Chin-Hung Chen, M.D., from Chiayi Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Chiayi, Taiwan, and colleagues conducted a cohort study to examine whether prenatal benzodiazepine exposure is associated with development of ASD and ADHD. Data were included for 1,138,732 mothers with 1,516,846 [live births](#) between Jan. 1, 2004, and Dec. 31, 2017.

Overall, 5.0 percent of the children were exposed to a benzodiazepine during pregnancy. The researchers found that benzodiazepine exposure was associated with increased risks for ADHD (hazard ratios [95 percent confidence intervals], 1.24 [1.20 to 1.28], 1.27 [1.21 to 1.34], and 1.25 [1.14 to 1.37] for first-, second-, and third-trimester exposure, respectively) and ASD (hazard ratios [95 percent confidence intervals], 1.13 [1.05 to 1.21], 1.10 [0.98 to 1.22], and 1.21 [1.00 to 1.47] for first-, second-, and third-trimester exposure, respectively). However, compared with unexposed sibling controls during the same period, the differences were no longer significant for ADHD (hazard ratios [95 percent confidence intervals], 0.91 [0.83 to 1.00], 0.89 [0.78 to 1.01], and 1.08 [0.83 to 1.41] for first-, second-, and third-trimester exposure, respectively) or ASD (hazard ratios [95 percent confidence intervals], 0.92 [0.75 to 1.14], 0.97 [0.71 to 1.33], and 1.07 [0.53 to 2.16] for first-, second-, and third-trimester exposure, respectively).

"Our results challenge current assumptions of a potential association of neurodevelopmental disorders with maternal benzodiazepine use before or during pregnancy," the authors write.

Several authors disclosed financial ties to the [pharmaceutical industry](#).

More information: Vincent Chin-Hung Chen et al, Association of Prenatal Exposure to Benzodiazepines With Development of Autism Spectrum and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.43282](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.43282)

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