

# A high fat diet during pregnancy can lead to severe liver disease in offspring

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Scientists have discovered a previously unknown link between a mother's diet in pregnancy and a severe form of liver disease in her child.

In a study, published in the journal *Hepatology* today, researchers at the University of Southampton found that a high fat diet during a woman's pregnancy makes her offspring more likely to develop a severe form of fatty liver disease when they reach adulthood. The findings are another piece in the jigsaw for scientists who believe diets containing too high levels of saturated fat may have an adverse effect on our health.

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is a condition associated with obesity and caused by the build up of fat in the liver. The condition advances in some people and it is important to understand the factors that contribute to disease progression. Until recently, NAFLD was considered rare and relatively harmless but now it is one of the most common forms of liver disease that may progress to cirrhosis a serious life threatening [chronic liver disease](#).

Professor Christopher Byrne, with colleagues Dr Felino Cagampang and Dr Kim Bruce, of the University's School of Medicine and researchers at King's College London, conducted the study, funded by the BBSRC. Prof Byrne explained: "This research shows that too much saturated fat in a mother's diet can affect the developing liver of a fetus, making it more susceptible to developing fatty liver disease later in life. An unhealthy saturated fat-enriched diet in the child and young adult compounds the problem further causing a severe form of the fatty liver disease later in adult life."

The next stage of this research, also funded by the BBSRC, will be to understand, more precisely, the reason why fatty liver disease develops and to intervene to prevent the [fatty liver disease](#) occurring.

The University's School of Medicine has a worldwide reputation for its pioneering research into the relationship between mothers' diets in pregnancy and future health problems in their offspring.

More information: The paper is available on *Hepatology's* website by visiting: [www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/106570044/home](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/106570044/home) . Ref: [DOI 10.1002/hep.23205](https://doi.org/10.1002/hep.23205)

Source: University of Southampton

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