

Childhood asthma linked to depression during pregnancy

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Anxiety, stress and depression during pregnancy may lead to a greater risk of asthma for your child, according to researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Study results are published in the July issue of *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

"Approximately 70% of mothers who said they experienced high levels of anxiety or [depression](#) while they were pregnant reported their child had wheezed before age 5," said Marilyn Reyes, senior research worker at the Mailman School of Public Health's Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH), and lead author of the study. "Understanding how maternal health affects a child's respiratory health is important in developing effective strategies to prevent asthma."

The study of 279 inner-city African-American and Hispanic women was conducted before, during [pregnancy](#) and after birth. The findings support a growing body of research showing that exposures can influence the risk of developing asthma. While somewhat similar findings have been reported in non-minority populations, this study is the first to report an association between prenatal psychological stress and wheeze in minority populations.

"The symptoms of pediatric asthma can range from a nagging cough that lingers for days or weeks to sudden and scary breathing emergencies," said allergist/pulmonologist Rachel Miller, MD, Co-Deputy Director of CCCEH and study senior author. "While low-income families experience stressors from many sources that may contribute to adverse health outcomes in children, understanding how children's health may be influenced by these factors is an important step in developing effective interventions."

Common [asthma](#) symptoms include:

- Coughing, especially at night
- Wheezing or whistling sound, especially when breathing out
- Trouble breathing or fast breathing that causes the skin around the ribs or neck to pull in tightly
- Frequent colds that settle in the chest

Provided by Columbia University

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