

Offspring of mothers stressed during pregnancy with a passive stress coping style more prone to obesity

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Research to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior (SSIB), the foremost society for research into all aspects of eating and drinking behavior, shows that passively coping offspring of mothers stressed during their pregnancy were at risk to develop obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Previous research in rodents suggested that both prenatal stress exposure and passive stress coping style might predispose offspring to develop [type 2 diabetes](#) later in life. Passive stress coping is typically seen in more introverted [personality types](#) whereas, proactive stress coping is typically seen in more extroverted personalities. The research team at Johns Hopkins exposed pregnant rats to different [stressors](#) during the third week of their pregnancy. The study found there was a difference in risk for diabetes and obesity in offspring from stressed mothers depending on the coping style of the offspring. Stressed dams' offspring that had been characterized by a passive stress coping style, showed increased weight gain and developed impaired [glucose tolerance](#), an early indicator of diabetes, whereas prenatally stressed offspring characterized by proactive stress coping did not.

Lead investigator Gretha Boersma says: "These results may imply that in our efforts to prevent obesity and its associated disorders we need to advise pregnant women to reduce stress exposure during their pregnancy. In addition, these data may lead to the identification of at-risk offspring

by looking at their stress coping style and prenatal environment, and then tailoring a prevention strategy accordingly."

Provided by Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior

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