

# THE DISABILITY AND PREGNANCY STUDY *snapshot*



## Maternal disability and risk for pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum complications: a systematic review and meta-analysis

### What is the research about?

Pregnancy is becoming more common in women with disabilities. Studies are beginning to show that women with disabilities may be at increased risk for complications around the time of pregnancy. A summary of this research is needed to inform health care programs. This new report examines existing research on the risk of complications during pregnancy and delivery, and after pregnancy, in women with disabilities.

### What did the researchers do?

The researchers used data from published papers that were obtained by searching several library databases. They looked at data on the risks of complications during pregnancy and delivery, and after pregnancy, among women with physical, sensory, and intellectual and developmental disabilities, compared to women without these disabilities.

### What did the researchers find?

- The researchers found 23 studies reporting on pregnancy-related outcomes among women with disabilities; only 3 of these studies were Canadian.
- Women with any disability and intellectual

and developmental disabilities had increased risk for complications related to high blood pressure in pregnancy.

- Women with any, physical, and intellectual and developmental disabilities also had increased risk for cesarean delivery.
- More than half of the studies were rated as having weak quality. Their most important limitation was that they did not account for social and health factors that could explain differences in risk between women with and without disabilities.

### What you need to know

Women with disabilities may be at greater risk for complications around the time of pregnancy compared to women without disabilities. More research is needed to understand the reasons for this risk and to develop services to support women with disabilities during and after pregnancy.

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## How can we use this research?

Knowing that women with disabilities may be at increased risk for pregnancy-related complications shows the need to explore what social and health factors might be contributing to these risks. These findings also show the need to consider what programs and services might best support women with disabilities before, during, and after pregnancy. For example, women with disabilities might benefit from better pre-pregnancy care to address risk factors early and from more specialized services during and after pregnancy. Health care providers such as obstetricians may require more disability-related training to support these efforts.

## About the researchers

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## Do you want to know more?

This snapshot is based on the following article: Tarasoff LA, Ravindran S, Malik H, Salaeva D, Brown HK. Maternal disability and risk of pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum complications: a systematic review and meta-analysis. American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology in press; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2019.07.015>

## About the Disability and Pregnancy Study

The Disability and Pregnancy Study is a research program aiming to enhance the perinatal care of women with disabilities. This work is conducted by an international team of researchers in partnership with a dedicated Advisory Committee comprised of individuals with lived experience, service-providers, and policy-makers.

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## Keywords

*Disability, Pregnancy complications, Systematic review, Meta-analysis*



Images in this report were obtained from the following sources:

1. Sunnybrook Hospital. (2017). Making pregnancy more accessible for women with disabilities. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <http://health.sunnybrook.ca/pregnancy/accessible-care-pregnancy-clinic/>
2. BabyCentre. (2018). Baby signing. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a547348/baby-signing>
3. American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. (2010). Blind children with additional disabilities. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr29/2/fr2902tc.htm>

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