

THE DISABILITY AND PREGNANCY STUDY *snapshot*



Health of newborns and infants born to women with disabilities: A meta-analysis

What is the research about?

The newborn and infant periods are important for determining long-term health and development. This new report summarizes existing literature on the health outcomes of newborns and infants born to 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 health complications in newborns and infants of women with physical, sensory, and intellectual or developmental disabilities, compared to those born to women without these disabilities.

What did the researchers find?

- The researchers found 31 studies reporting on the health of newborns and infants of women with disabilities; only one study was Canadian.
- Most studies examined women with any disability or intellectual or developmental disabilities; few studies examined women with physical or sensory disabilities.

- Newborns of women with disabilities were more likely than those of women without disabilities to have low birth weight and to be born early.
- There was some evidence that they were more likely to have other newborn complications, but very few studies examined later infant outcomes.
- Many studies had weak quality; just under half did not account for any social or health factors that could explain the risks for complications.

What you need to know

Newborns of women with disabilities may be at greater risk for having low birth weight and being born early. More research is needed to understand the reasons for these risks, to better support women with disabilities during and after pregnancy.

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How can we use this research?

Knowing that newborns of women with disabilities may be at elevated risk for having low birth weight or being born early shows the need to understand the social and health factors that may contribute to these risks. These findings also suggest the need to consider what services may benefit women with disabilities. Such services may include prenatal care with health care providers with disability-related expertise, as well as family-centered pediatric care for infants of women with disabilities that considers the multiple barriers that women with disabilities face.

About the researchers

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Do you want to know more?

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For more information about this article or the Disability and Pregnancy Study, contact Dr. Hilary Brown at hk.brown@utoronto.ca.

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, Newborns, Infants, Low Birth Weight, Preterm Birth



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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