

## **Effects of prenatal stress on toddler development**

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Maternal stress during pregnancy can significantly impact prenatal development. This study investigates the effects of prenatal stress on toddlers' development between 12 and 18 months of age. A meta-analysis of literature published from 2014 to 2024 was conducted. Keywords included maternal stress, infant development, infant neurological development, pregnancy hardships, prenatal medical effects, and disparities affecting expecting mothers. Sources included Wiley Library, Google Scholar, and PubMed. Inclusion criteria focused on studies involving toddlers aged 12 to 18 months, mothers experiencing prenatal stress, and associated social and environmental stress factors. Studies involving children outside this age range were excluded. Twenty articles focused on prenatal stress for toddlers aged 12 -18 months; however, only five include social factors. Findings indicate prenatal stress increases the risk of maternal depression, potentially leading to impaired neurological development and health-compromising behaviors in toddlers. Socioeconomic stress factors, including maternal inflammation linked to prenatal stress, were associated with negative behavioral and cognitive development. African American women experiencing social disadvantages such as single parenthood and poverty were more likely to engage in lower rates of physical activity and higher rates of substance abuse, contributing to adverse fetal development outcomes. Prenatal stress has negative implications related to neurological, cognitive, and behavioral development within toddlers aged 12 to 18 months. These findings underscore the importance of targeted health promotion programs to mitigate prenatal stress in diverse

maternal populations and emphasize the need for early developmental interventions. Further research is essential to quantify prenatal stress rates and assess its severity concerning child development during the first two years of life.