Black and Latino Moms' Mental Distress May Increase Babies' Asthma Risk

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Anxiety, depression and stress during pregnancy aren't just bad for mothers, they may also increase their children's risk of developing childhood asthma, according to research from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health published in the Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.

In one of the first studies to look at the relationship between prenatal mental health in African-American moms and the postnatal health of their babies, researchers set out to look at the connection between psychological distress and wheeze.

According to Columbia University press materials, researchers recruited 279 pregnant inner-city African-American and Dominican women between ages 18 and 35 who lived in New York City. Study participants filled out questionnaires before and after they gave birth, and mothers reported the age they first heard their children wheezing. About 70 percent of mothers who reported they'd experienced high stress and depression levels said their children had wheezed before their fifth birthday.

"Understanding how maternal health affects a child's respiratory health is an important step in developing effective strategies to prevent asthma," said Marilyn Reyes, BA, a senior researcher at the university and lead study author.

If your child develops common asthma symptoms, such as wheezing or a whistling sound when breathing out, coughing (especially at night), fast breathing that causes the skin to pull in tightly, or frequent chest colds, see an allergist to determine treatment.

To learn more about childhood asthma and possible treatment options, click here.

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