

Link found between obesity during pregnancy and increased risk of sudden unexpected infant death

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A multi-institutional team of statistical researchers has found a slightly

heightened risk of sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) in babies born to obese mothers. In their study, [published](#) in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, the group analyzed data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) regarding infant death records. The journal has also published an [Editorial Comment](#) on the research by the team.

Prior research has shown that [obesity](#) during pregnancy can lead to an increased risk of general infant mortality, along with a host of both maternal and infant health issues. But to date, there has been little to no research regarding a link between obesity during pregnancy and SUID.

To learn more about possible SUID rates and obesity during pregnancy, the research team examined data from the NCHS with a focus on infant deaths over the years 2015 to 2019. The researchers analyzed all the data for live births at 28 weeks gestation or later and followed for up to 364 days after birth. The team then compared deaths due to SUID from obese mothers with SUID deaths in which the mother was not obese.

They found that of 19 million babies born during the study period, 16,545 had died of SUID, and of those, 5.4% were attributable to maternal obesity during gestation—rates that translated to 0.74 per 1,000 live births for babies born to non-obese mothers and 1.47 per 1,000 live births for mothers who were obese.

The researchers also noted that [obese mothers](#) were also more likely to experience sleep apnea during pregnancy. Prior research has shown that [sleep apnea](#) during pregnancy can lead to a variety of [pregnancy](#)-related health problems such as preeclampsia. Some research has also suggested it can have [negative impacts](#) on fetal growth as well.

The research team suggests more research is required regarding the increased risk of SUID due to the ongoing rise in the number of women who are obese while pregnant.

More information: Darren Tanner et al, Maternal Obesity and Risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.2455](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.2455)

Jacqueline Maya et al, Maternal Obesity and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death—Beyond the Scale, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.2459](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.2459)

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