

## Stress on pregnant women from COVID will lead to smaller newborn babies

The impact of chronic emotional stress on human growth has been investigated by scientists for decades, with many studies specifically focusing on how the [birth weight](#) of babies is impacted as this is one of the key predictors of health risks at birth and in later life.

The consequences of low birth [weight](#)—defined as a weight of less than 2500 grams for a pregnancy duration between 37-42 weeks (weight adjusted for shorter pregnancies)—include an increased risk of: infection; poor learning and school performance; psychological problems; reduced adult earnings; adult overweight, diabetes, and heart disease; and, on average, an earlier age at death, say researchers.

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[Researchers Barry Bogin and Carlos Varea] predict that “it will take two or more generations to assess the biocultural consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on people—from fetuses to the aged.”

However, “one may hypothesize that for the immediate future there will be a global rise in maternal emotional stress and a decline in birth weight.”

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Professor Bogin and Dr. Varea said: “Fear of pandemic disease spreads as fast and as deep as the disease itself. The fear plays out in many ways, from extremes of paranoia and violence, to xenophobia, closed borders, economic lockdowns, and social distancing. The fear pervades every level of society. The fear causes emotional stress. Chronic emotional stress—from insecurity that lasts for months or years—has biological impacts on people.”

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