

DANISH STUDY EXAMINES INFECTIONS DURING PREGNANCY AND AUTISM RISK

A large study of children in Denmark found that children whose mothers had influenza or a fever lasting more than a week during pregnancy had a higher risk of autism. The study, “Autism After Infection, Febrile Episodes, and Antibiotic Use During Pregnancy: An Exploratory Study,” will be published in the December 2012 *Pediatrics* and released online Nov. 12. Researchers studied a population-based cohort of 96,736 children born in Denmark between 1997 and 2003. Mothers were asked about common infections, fevers and antibiotic use during their pregnancies and early postpartum. Researchers found no association between common maternal infections like respiratory infection, urinary tract infection or genital infections and a child’s risk of autism. Children whose mothers reported influenza during pregnancy had twice the risk of being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder before age 3, and children whose mothers had a fever lasting more than a week during pregnancy had a threefold risk of autism. Researchers also found a small increased risk for autism among children whose mothers used antibiotics during pregnancy. However, study authors say that due to methodologic limitations of the study, the findings may be due to chance, and further research is needed.

[Embargoed to 12:01 a.m. ET Monday, Nov. 12. For an embargoed copy of the study, contact the AAP Department of Communications. For an interview with study author Hjordis Osk Atladottir, contact her at xxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxx Denmark); for an interview with study author Diana E. Schendel, PhD, contact CDC Media Relations at xxxxxxxx.]