

Air Pollution and Birth Weight

Does air pollution affect pregnancy outcomes?

What did we want to know?



If there is more outdoor air pollution during a mother's pregnancy, is her baby born with lower birth weight?

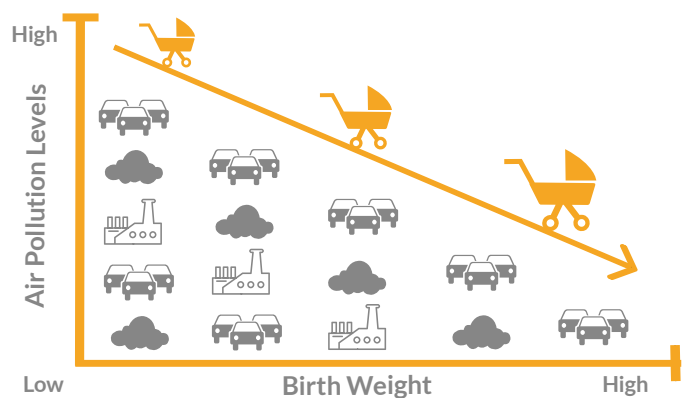
What did we do?

We reviewed and compared the following data from 1994 - 2004:

- 1 The health records of full-term live births in the Atlanta-area.
- 2 Daily air pollution measurements from stationary air monitors taken during the pregnancy of each recorded birth.



What did we find?



Increased levels of air pollution during late-pregnancy were related to slightly lower birth weight, especially among Black and Hispanic babies.

Traffic-related pollution appeared to have the strongest association with birth weight.

What does this mean for you?

Birth weight is strongly linked to a baby's health outcomes. This Atlanta-based study, along with other studies, have found that exposure to outdoor air pollution during pregnancy may contribute to slightly lower birth weight, more so for Black and Hispanic babies.

There are other exposures, such as smoking cigarettes or being exposed to cigarette smoke during pregnancy, that have a greater effect on birth weight.

If you are pregnant, especially during the third trimester:

- You may want to limit time on or near busy roadways. If you must drive in traffic, keep the windows closed, set the ventilation to recirculate, and, if possible, use AC.
- You may want to limit time outdoors on days with high levels of air pollution (at other times, enjoy the outdoors!).
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.

Check local air pollution levels by watching your local weather station or searching EPA's "Air Now" website:

<https://www.airnow.gov/>

For support to quit smoking call 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Darrow, Lyndsey A., Mitchel Klein, Matthew J. Strickland, James A. Mulholland, and Paige E. Tolbert. (2010) Ambient air pollution and birth weight in full-term infants in Atlanta, 1994-2004. *Environmental health perspectives*, 119(5), 731-737.



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