

The Triple B Study:

Bumps, Babies and Beyond

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The Triple B Study Newsletter
University of New South Wales
Curtin University



To all our participating families,

The last year has seen many new families join the Triple B Study and has been a very exciting year on the project.

Before filling you in on these new developments, I would like to once again thank you and your young children for being involved in this tremendously important study. We appreciate the time you have dedicated and the great interest you have all shown in the research.

We now have around 800 families participating in the study, 700 in NSW and 100 in WA. It has been an exciting year for our research team with the commencement of the age one developmental assessments. We have enjoyed seeing families through their pregnancy, meeting your little ones around 8 weeks, and then seeing families again when their infants reach one year of age. It is a unique and special opportunity for us to be part of this amazing time of change and development. As a mother of two young children myself (Audrey is four years and Oscar two), seeing your

babies grow and develop and identifying the factors that promote good health and resilience through early life is very meaningful to me.

We have now completed age one assessments for over 200 families. As many families will be coming up for their age one follow-up in the new year we have included a section on page four which provides more information about the developmental tool we use at this assessment called the Bayley Scales of Infant Development. The Bayley Scales are widely used by clinicians in both the public and private sector. The assessment will provide you with unique information about your child's development in a range of domains including language, motor skills and cognition. The test is administered by trained and experienced researchers from the project who will provide you with a written report on your child's development.

In our last newsletter I told families about the work we were doing in developing a further follow-up of families when the children reach three years of age. We have had full ethics approval to proceed and were very fortunate to receive funding for one

year through Rotary Health Australia. This funding means that we can now follow-up our original group of 70 pilot study families first recruited at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 2008-2009. For a small group of you with children around age three we hope to be in touch soon to invite you to be involved. This follow-up will consist of mother and partner interviews and questionnaires, and further best practice assessments of children's health and development, including a complimentary follow-up with the Bayley Scales of Infant Development and written feedback about your child. We are seeking larger-scale funding to support this work and very much hope that we will be able to offer the opportunity to be involved to all our families in the future.

We wish all our families the very best over the festive season. For families new to the study in recent months, we hope for the safe and happy arrival of your little ones.

Dr Delyse Hutchinson
Child Developmental Clinical
Psychologist and Senior Research Fellow





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Progress to date...

The main objective of the Triple B Study is to investigate the impact of factors such as parental substance use, diet and nutrition, psychological health and social support on infant development and family functioning. Being the first large scale Australian study to comprehensively examine these issues in pregnant women and partners, we hope to improve knowledge of these effects to direct public health and treatment initiatives that improve the health and well being of Australian children and families.

We have recently been awarded a Rotary Health Australia Grant to follow up the families in the original pilot study whose children will shortly be turning three years of age. If your child is in this group, we will soon be contacting you again so hopefully you will be able to participate and continue to support our study as you have done previously.

We recently presented some of our preliminary results at the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) Conference held in Hobart in mid November.

Preliminary results on 176 mothers and 121 of their partners showed some interesting findings. In the mothers studied, a large proportion of our sample reported pre-pregnancy use of alcohol and tobacco, however the use of these substances markedly declined in pregnancy, especially in the second and third trimesters. Despite a marked decline following trimester one, one third of the sample were still consuming alcohol in pregnancy, and one in seven were consuming alcohol weekly or more often. This suggests that alcohol use is relatively common in pregnancy despite changes in the national guidelines advising women not to drink in pregnancy.

Meet the team

Chief Investigators

Professor Richard Mattick

Professor at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales

Dr Delyse Hutchinson

Senior Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales

Professor Steve Allsop

Director at the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology

Professor Jake Najman

Director at the Queensland Alcohol and Drug Research and Education Centre, University of Queensland

Professor Elizabeth Elliot

Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Sydney

Dr Lucy Burns

Senior Lecturer at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales

Dr Sue Jacobs

Visiting Medical Officer
Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Women and Babies

Associate Professor Craig Olsson

Developmental Psychologist at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne

Professor Anne Bartu

Professor at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Curtin University of Technology

Contact Us!

If you have any queries or comments or would like further information on the study please contact us at:

antenatalstudy@unsw.edu.au

We would also like to inform families that as much as possible we will attempt to have the same research officer complete the surveys with you, however this may not always be possible due to staff availability and training.

Approximately one quarter of women reported experiencing levels of anxiety and stress above the population averages. This is consistent with past research showing the antenatal period as a stressful time for women. The study also found that higher levels of anxiety, stress and depression were associated with higher use of alcohol and tobacco in the first trimester.

We also examined how partners' substance use compared with women in the antenatal period. The results showed that maternal alcohol and tobacco use was associated with partner alcohol and tobacco use both prior to, and during pregnancy. Of the women who reported that they drank at some point prior to pregnancy, 94% of their partners also drank pre-pregnancy. This was also the case during pregnancy - for women who reported that they drank during pregnancy, 98% of their partners also drank during that time period. Most women only reported drinking at relatively low levels, that is, the occasional glass of wine.

In pre-pregnancy, drinking alcohol at risky levels (i.e., four or more drinks in one occasion) in women was again associated with risky drinking in partners. The same trend was found for tobacco smoking. Use of illicit drugs (e.g., cannabis, cocaine) was low among the sample and was not examined in this case.

These results suggest that partners are likely to continue to influence one another with respect to their alcohol and tobacco use pre-pregnancy and during pregnancy. The larger study will clarify these results, however early findings do indicate that public health messages should target not just pregnant women, but their partners as well.



Research Officers



Alexandra Aiken
Research Officer
(02) 9385 0111



Annie Bleeker
Senior Research Officer
(02) 9385 0171



Sarah Brann
Research Officer
(02) 9385 0154



Chiara Bucello
Research Officer
(02) 9385 0316



Gabrielle Campbell
Senior Research Officer
(02) 93850286



Jo Cassar
Team Manager
(02) 9385 0397



Laura Dewberry
Co-Manager
(02) 9385 0190



Maria Gomez
Project Operations Co-ordinator
(02) 9385 0184



Ingrid Honan
Research Officer
(02) 9385 0382



Thea Gumbert
Research Officer
(02) 9385 0171

The Bayley Scales of Infant Development



When your child reaches 12 months of age one of the assessments we administer in the study is the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID-III is the current version). The Bayley is a standard series of measurements originally developed by psychologist Nancy Bayley primarily to assess the motor (fine and gross), language (receptive and expressive), and cognitive development of infants and toddlers, aged 0 to 3.5 years. This measure consists of a series of developmental play tasks and takes between 45 - 60 minutes to administer.

The first three scales are administered by an independent, trained assessor. Two further scales are based on caregiver self report about their infant's behaviour which is gathered through a questionnaire.

Our team has lots of experience in conducting these assessments and the tasks are tailored to the child's age. In most cases it is lots of fun for your young one. If you have other children it is great if they can be cared for by a supportive person so that the infant can focus on the tasks, but if not please let the team know in advance and we can talk through ways to help the assessment run as smoothly as possible. Some children prefer their siblings to be there.

There are benefits to the family in doing this assessment as this test helps families to identify how their children are doing on a range of developmental milestones and you will receive a written report. The Bayley Assessment would normally be very costly if done privately so it is a key benefit to families that it is included in the study.

Families that take part in the Age three follow-up will have the chance to see how their child is developing as they grow as we will reassess children using the Bayley and again will provide a written report to parents after assessment.



Have you moved recently?

Or changed phone numbers, email addresses or any other contact details? If so, you can update your details on our website:

<http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/content/project-participant>