

PRENATAL STRESS AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

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As a result of increasing evidence that the origins of many illnesses begin in fetal life, the importance of prenatal events are growing. Many animal and human studies have been made to reveal the effect of prenatal stress on psychopathology. In general, most of the studies of prenatal stress agree with negative feedback dysregulation and hyperactivity of hypothalamo pituitary adrenocortical axis. Evident findings of studies are; increased risk of birth complications, startle or distress in response to novel and surprising stimuli during infancy; lower Full Scale IQs, language abilities and attention deficiency in period of 3-5 years; increased risk of ADHD, anxiety symptoms, depressive disorder and impulsivity during adolescence. Additionally, timing of prenatal stress is also important and 12-22 weeks of gestation seems to be the most vulnerable period. The results underline the need for early prevention and intervention programs for highly anxious women during pregnancy. Administration of prenatal stress monitoring to public health programs or removing pregnant women who have been exposed to life events such as natural disaster, terror attack to secure areas that provide basic needs may be important.