

# Association of Maternal Exposure to Childhood Abuse With Elevated Risk for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Offspring.

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## Abstract

Children whose mothers experienced childhood abuse are more likely to suffer various neurodevelopmental deficits. Whether an association exists specifically for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is unknown. We examined the association of maternal experience of childhood abuse with ADHD in offspring, assessed by maternal report of diagnosis and validated with the ADHD Rating Scale-IV in a subsample, in the Nurses' Health Study II (n = 49,497 mothers, N offspring cases = 7,607, N offspring controls = 102,151). We examined whether ten adverse perinatal circumstances (e.g., prematurity, smoking) or socioeconomic factors accounted for a possible association. Exposure to abuse was associated with greater prevalence of ADHD in offspring (8.7% of offspring of women exposed to severe abuse vs. 5.5% of offspring of women not abused, P = 0.0001) and with greater risk for ADHD adjusted for demographic factors (male offspring, risk ratio (RR) = 1.6; 95% CI: 1.3, 1.9; female offspring, RR = 2.3, 95% CI: 1.7, 3.0). Adjusted for perinatal factors, the association of maternal childhood abuse with ADHD in offspring was slightly attenuated (male offspring, RR = 1.5; 95% CI: 1.2, 1.8; female offspring, RR = 2.1, 95% CI: 1.6, 2.8). We identified an association between maternal experience of childhood abuse and risk for ADHD in offspring, which was not explained by several important perinatal risk factors or socioeconomic status.