

# Prenatal Vitamins May Lessen Autism Risk

by Shaun Heasley | January 9, 2018

Taking certain supplements while pregnant may reduce the risk that a child will develop autism, a new study suggests.

Researchers looked at more than 45,000 Israeli children born between 2003 and 2007, tracking their development until 2015.

They found that kids born to mothers who took folic acid and multivitamins before and during pregnancy were less likely to be on the spectrum.

“Maternal exposure to (folic acid) and multivitamin supplements before and during pregnancy is associated with a reduced risk of ASD in offspring compared with offspring of mothers without such exposure,” wrote Stephen Z. Levine of the University of Haifa and his colleagues in findings published this month in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Mothers prescribed one or both of the supplements during pregnancy were 73 percent less likely to have a child with autism, the study found.

Ultimately, 572 of the children studied were diagnosed with autism.

The study authors noted that their research was limited by a reliance on prescription data. Some mothers may have taken over-the-counter supplements and it's unknown if all the mothers prescribed supplements actually took them, they said.

Moreover, the researchers acknowledged that other factors may have been at play in altering the children's autism risk, so further study is needed to replicate the findings.

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