

Maternal Cell Phone Use During Pregnancy Associated With Increased Risk for Hyperactivity and Inattention in Child

An ISGlobal study, the largest to date on this topic, analysed the behaviour of almost 84,000 mother and child pairs

Barcelona, 19 April 2017.- **Pregnant women** whose **cell phone use** is classified as medium or high are more likely to have a child with behavioural problems, particularly **hyperactivity and inattention**. This was the conclusion of a new [study](#) coordinated by the [Barcelona Institute for Global Health \(ISGlobal\)](#), a foundation supported by the "la Caixa" Foundation.

The study, the largest to date on this type of association, forms part of the [European Geronimo project](#). It analysed data from **83,884 mother and child pairs** in Spain, Denmark, Korea, the Netherlands, and Norway. The researchers analysed the mobile phone use of the mothers during pregnancy and the behaviour of the children at ages ranging from **5 to 7 years**.

One of the main conclusions of the study was that the children of mothers who did not use a mobile phone at all during pregnancy were less likely to have **behavioural problems**, such as hyperactivity, inattention or emotional problems. Overall, 39% of the women in the study did not use a mobile phone during pregnancy. Most of this group were from the Danish cohort, which was recruited for the study during an earlier period (1996 to 2002), when mobile phones were much less used than today. Mobile phone use was classified as low in 29% of the mothers, medium in 27%, and high in 5.7%.

Laura Birks, an ISGlobal researcher and first author of the study, emphasises that the results show "**consistent evidence** of an association between medium or high use of a mobile phone by the mother during pregnancy and increased risk for hyperactivity and inattention problems". Of all the children analysed, 6.6% had general behavioural problems, 8.3% displayed hyperactivity and inattention, and 12% had emotional problems.

Future research should also study "how the foetus is affected by **exposure to the radiofrequency energy** emitted by cell phones", added Martine Vrijheid, the ISGlobal researcher who coordinated the study. It is also possible that mothers with hyperactivity problems are more likely to make more phone calls or that the hyperactivity is hereditary.

Reference

Laura Birks, Mònica Guxens, Eleni Papadopoulou, Jan Alexander, Ferran Ballester, Marisa Estarlich, Mara Gallastegi, Mina Ha, Margaretha Haugen, Anke Huss, Leeka Kheifets, Hyungruyul Limi, Jørn Olsenm, Loreto Santa-Marina, Madhuri Sudan, Roel Vermeulen, Tanja Vrijkotte, Elisabeth Cardis, Martine Vrijheid. [Maternal cell phone use during pregnancy and child behavioral problems in five birth cohorts](#). Environmental International. 7 April 2017. doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2017.03.024

Press ISGlobal

Aleix Cabrera

aleix.cabrera@isglobal.org

93 214 7333

Beatriz Fiestas

beatriz.fiestas@isglobal.org

669 877 850