

The Triple B Study: Bumps, Babies and Beyond

DECEMBER
2012



A message from our lead investigator, Dr Delyse Hutchinson...

In the past year the Triple B Study has doubled in size from 800 families to almost 1,600 with approximately 1,300 in NSW and 300 in WA. We very much welcome all of our new families.

I would like to 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. 2012 has been an exciting year for our research team. We have enjoyed seeing families through their pregnancy, meeting your little ones at around 8 weeks, and then seeing families when their infants reach one and three years of age.

It is a unique and special opportunity for us to be part of this amazing time of change and development. I myself have had my third child recently; my youngest, Molly, is now 4 months of age. This experience makes seeing your infants grow and develop and identifying the factors that promote good health and resilience through early life all the more meaningful to me.

We have completed age one assessments for 500 families. As many families will be coming up for their age one follow-up in the new year we have once again included a section on page four which provides 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. The test is administered by trained and experienced researchers from the project that will provide you with a written report on your child's development.

In the past year we were fortunate to receive funding through Rotary Health Australia which has enabled us to conduct a preschool follow-up of our original group of pilot study families first recruited at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 2008-2009. It has been a wonderful new arm to the study and we have enjoyed meeting our pilot families again.

More recently we were awarded funding through the University of New South Wales to continue this follow-up into the new year. For families with children turning three we hope to be in touch during 2013 to invite you to be involved. This follow-up will consist of interviews, questionnaires, and further best practice assessments of children's health and development. We will also be including an important new component in the study whereby we invite mothers and their infants to visit us at the university to take part in an assessment examining infant development and interaction. We hope that we will be able to offer the opportunity to all our families in the future.

On behalf of the entire research team we wish you and your family all the very best over the holiday season. For families new to the study in recent months, we hope for the safe and happy arrival of your little ones.

Warm regards,

Dr Delyse Hutchinson

Child Developmental Clinical
Psychologist and Senior Research Fellow





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

Preliminary results showed some interesting findings. In the mothers studied, roughly half of our sample reported use of alcohol during pregnancy. However, the frequency of use reduced from the first trimester to the third with many women reporting that they ceased alcohol use once discovering their pregnancy. Of those women who continued to drink throughout the pregnancy the average quantity of use was low at less than one standard drink per occasion.

The Triple B Study also investigates factors such as attachment to the baby both during and after pregnancy. This year we also considered mental health factors amongst our sample. When considering the use of caffeine, alcohol and tobacco alongside antenatal attachment we found that overall the use of these substances had little impact on attachment to the unborn baby. Approximately one quarter of women reported experiencing levels of anxiety above the population averages. This is consistent with past research showing that the antenatal period as a stressful time for women.

The Triple B Study has been completing the age three follow up for our initial 69 families. This stage of the study has been warmly received by participants. Families have been excited by the opportunity to participate and to receive feedback on their child's development. Currently we have completed 60 of these follow ups which have included completing a developmental assessment of the three year old children which has been both fun and challenging! We have travelled interstate and have collected data from families that have moved overseas. We greatly appreciate their continued

Meet the team

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support of The Triple B Study. It has been a pleasure catching up with the families and seeing how their children have grown. Many of whom have another addition to their family. It was lovely for us to touch base and see how the children and the family are developing.

We have also been contacting child care centres, family day care as well as family members who regularly care for three year olds. This has added another element to our study with rich data relating to educational factors, personality factors and social development. The carers have happily received the invite to participate.

Initial analyses using data collected from our pilot study examined the way substance use relates to child development. Results have shown a very minimal negative effect of using alcohol during the first trimester on development at one year of age. In saying this, results have also shown the effect was no longer apparent when the children reached three years of age. At this early stage of the three year follow up our results suggest that small amounts of alcohol use during pregnancy do not have a significant longer term impact on child development at age three. Our future follow ups with the larger study group will aim to increase our knowledge in this area.

The Western Australian arm of our study has been progressing well in 2012 with 300 families now participating from this site. The team have been dedicated to following up families when their babies are 8 weeks old and at 12 months and have completed many of these follow up assessments to date. The WA team look forward to visiting your families as your children grow.



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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 for families participating 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. 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 confidential website:

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

If you have any queries or comments or would like further information on the study please contact us at: antenatalstudy@unsw.edu.au

