

**Note for the Media WHO/Bulletin
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Mothers with depression in developing countries risk underweight or stunted children

Mothers with depressive symptoms are 40% more likely to have underweight or stunted children than mothers in good mental health, according to research published today in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*.

For the first time, researchers have analysed 17 different studies of almost 14 000 mothers and their young children (mostly aged less than 24 months) in 11 developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America. They found a strong link between maternal depressive symptoms and inadequate child growth, with more serious growth deficits found in children of mothers with more severe depression.

“Maternal depression is associated with less responsive caregiving and a lower likelihood or shorter duration of breastfeeding,” says researcher Pamela Surkan, of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the United States of America. “However, we know that depression can be affordably treated in developing countries through interventions such as social support, group therapy or home visits.”

Estimates of maternal depression in developing countries vary from 15 to 57%, partially due to the different ways countries measure depression. Early identification, treatment and prevention of maternal depression in developing countries would not only benefit the women but could improve child growth and, in turn, influence future population health and development.

Read the paper here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/8/11-088187.pdf>

The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* is one of the world's leading public health journals. It is the flagship periodical of WHO, with a special focus on developing countries. Articles are peer-reviewed and are independent of WHO guidelines. Abstracts are now available in the six official languages of the United Nations.

Further items in this month's issue include:

- *E.coli* outbreak raises questions about food safety
- New vaccine changes meningitis landscape in Africa
- Injectable contraceptives for Ethiopian women
- Volunteers on front-line against anti-malarial resistance in Cambodia
- Serious lack of surgical resources in the Gambia
- On track to reach global targets for halving tuberculosis
- Are antibiotics safe for severely malnourished children?
- Big gaps between rich and poor hamper development in Bangladesh

The August issue table of contents can be found at:

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/8/en/index.html>

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