

Introduction to the Special Series on Motherhood and Addiction

May 6, 2015

Mothers share a physical and emotional bond with their children that begins well before birth. Most of the time, this bond nourishes both the mother and the child. Unfortunately, the maternal bond can also transmit addiction and other harmful health conditions. This month, we mark Mother's Day by paying special attention to research that explores precisely how addiction can spread from mother to child. [We start with a study of prenatal alcohol exposure](#) and the long-term effects of this exposure on children's sensitivity to alcohol. Later on, we explore how a [mother's smoking](#) creates special health risks for her child, and the links between [gambling disorder and parent-child bonds](#). Recognizing that opioid abuse among pregnant women is at epidemic levels, [we describe the rates](#) at which pregnant women are seeking out and completing opioid treatment.

We are fortunate to supplement these science reviews with Op-Ed/Editorials from the cutting edge of science and treatment. Dr. Marjorie Meyer, a maternal fetal medicine physician, [takes the view](#) that respecting a pregnant woman's autonomy, rather than taking punitive actions, is the best way to encourage substance use disorder treatment—for the benefit of both the woman and the developing baby. Later in the month, Uditia Iyengar, a research coordinator and graduate student in psychology, [describes her role in ongoing research](#) designed to uncover how substance use disorders hijack a mother's natural reward system and disrupt mother/infant bonding.

All of these science reviews and editorials describe harmful behaviors, some of which have life-long consequences. But we take an optimistic view: only by understanding these harmful processes can we begin to develop ways to prevent and treat addiction and alleviate its impact on mothers, children, families, and society as a whole.

We hope you will enjoy and learn from this Special Series.