

Healthy Brain and Child Development

Participating in the largest, long-term study of early brain and child development in the United States

I recently came across a patient named Jamie when she asked some interesting questions about a new study she had heard about on child development. Jamie is pregnant with her second baby and got a flyer from the **Healthy Brain and Child Development study (HBCD)**. The HBCD is a national study being carried out at 27 sites in different parts of the country, with two sites at **MotherToBaby locations** including Emory University and UC San Diego. At first, she was undecided if she wanted to volunteer. It is a large-scale, long-term project with the goal to better understand how child development is affected by exposure to social and environmental experiences and conditions. She would be one of the 7,000 mother/infant pairs contributing their time and effort to this project.

Here were some questions that she was thinking about before deciding to join the research project. With so many research sites across the nation, you may be asking yourself these questions, too:

What is the HBCD goal and where is this study?

Most of the HBCD sites are at universities and hospitals that have a history of working with pregnant women and their babies. The study was developed by the National Institutes on Health, part of the US public health service. The goal is to understand children's brain development. HBCD aims to recruit 7000 pregnant women. Researchers will follow them, as well as their babies, over the first 10 years of life. They'll keep track to gather more information on how prebirth and after birth events affect the development of children's brain, more specifically, their cognitive and emotional functioning. The information that is collected (data) and will be stored at NIH. The data is made available to scientists who will use this information to improve our understanding of children's growth and adjustment. All information will be "deidentified". That means, to protect confidentiality, there will be NO information that could identify individual mothers or children in the stored data.

Who can participate?

HBCD will include pregnant women across the United States from both rural and metropolitan areas. Recruitment takes place during pregnancy with the first visit in the second trimester. HBCD enrolls women, 18 years and older, from different ethnic and racial groups based on the population of the sites where recruitment is taking place. They are able to include Spanish speakers by having staff who are bilingual. The study is interested in mother's health and exposures during pregnancy, as well as the caregiving environment that can predict how well children grow. As a result, they are looking for all kinds of women to participate, from the general population as well as those who use alcohol, tobacco, stimulants and opioids.

What will participation involve?

Parents will answer a series of questions through surveys and interviews. Mothers and babies will also provide urine and blood samples. In addition, HBCD is monitoring babies' sleep in the newborn period and taking "pictures" of children's brains as they develop using MRI and electroencephalograms (EEG) periodically over time. As they get older, babies' development and behavior will be tested to monitor how they are progressing.

There are several study visits in the first year after the baby arrives and then once a year until they are 10 years old. Families will be reimbursed for their time and travel expenses.

Jamie went to the HBCD website to answer some of her questions ([Home - UCSD - Healthy Brain and Child Development \(hbcdstudy.org\)](https://www.hbcdstudy.org)) and she also got in touch with the Project Coordinator at our HBCD site to ask more about the schedule and the MRI. She was satisfied with the answers and decided that she would like to make a contribution to children's futures by participating in HBCD. She has already completed her first visit and is looking forward to seeing us again when her son is born. Jamie shared with us that she wants to be part of HBCD because she understands how important understanding brain development and behavior is for both children and their families.

MotherToBaby experts know how important research is and supports the efforts of the HBCD study. You can learn more about MotherToBaby's own studies to consider as well [here](#).

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).

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