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Drinking Milk During Pregnancy May Lower Baby's Risk of Multiple Sclerosis

ScienceDaily (Feb. 12, 2010) — Drinking milk during pregnancy may help reduce your baby's chances of developing multiple sclerosis (MS) as an adult, according to a preliminary study released February 10 that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 62nd Annual Meeting in Toronto April 10 to April 17, 2010.

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The study involved 35,794 nurses whose mothers completed a questionnaire in 2001 about their experiences and diet during pregnancy with their nurse-daughter. Of the nurses studied, 199 women developed MS over the 16-year study period.

Researchers found that the risk of MS was lower among women born to mothers with high milk or dietary vitamin D intake in pregnancy.

"The risk of MS among daughters whose mothers consumed four glasses of milk per day was 56 percent lower than daughters whose mothers consumed less than three glasses of milk per month," said Fariba Mirzaei, MD, with the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

"We also found the risk of MS among daughters whose mothers were in the top 20 percent of vitamin D intake during pregnancy was 45 percent lower than daughters whose mothers were in the bottom 20 percent for vitamin D intake during pregnancy."

"There is growing evidence that that vitamin D has an effect on MS. The results of this study suggest that this effect may begin in the womb," said Mirzaei.

Fortified milk, fatty fish such as salmon and exposure to sunlight are the most important sources of vitamin D.

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