

by Scott\_LaFee

As if pregnancy wasn't anxiety-inducing enough, a new English study suggests that anxious or depressed mothers-to-be are more likely to have children with sleep problems in their first years of life.

BEST MEDICINE - What do you say to others when the passenger in your car is a skeleton? CNS Photo. NO LULLABY - A new English study suggests that anxious or depressed mothers-to-be are more likely to have children with sleep problems in their first years of life. CNS Photo. MEDTRONICA - The NetWellness Web site at [www.netwellness.org](http://www.netwellness.org) is a nonprofit consumer health Web site produced by medical and health professional faculty at the University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University and Ohio State University. CNS Photo. While this is bad news for future parents (no sleep for the weary), it may be even more so for the kids. Sleep in the first years of life is considered a key index of healthy development, playing a crucial role in memory and learning consolidation, in the regulation of metabolism, in sustaining the immune function and in promoting a general sense of well-being.

"We've long known that a child's sleep is vital to his or her growth," said study author Thomas O'Connor of the University of Rochester Medical Center, "but the origins of problems affecting it remained unclear. Now we have evidence that these patterns may be set early on, perhaps even before birth."

O'Connor and colleagues studied more than 14,000 women living in Avon, England, who were due to give birth in a 21-month window.

They found that babies born to mothers classified as anxious or depressed during pregnancy slept just as long as their unstressed-pregnancy counterparts - about 12 hours.

The difference was in the quality of the sleep. Children born to mothers who were depressed or anxious during pregnancy were 40 percent more likely to experience sleep problems: difficulty or refusal to go to sleep, nightmares, waking up early. The problems tended to persist until the child was about 30 months old.

The researchers speculate that anxious and depressed mothers-to-be produce more stress hormones, like cortisol, that disrupt the formation of a bundle of nerves in the unborn child's brain that serves as a tuner for the body's internal clock.

MEDTRONICA

NetWellness

[www.netwellness.org](http://www.netwellness.org)

NetWellness is a nonprofit consumer health Web site produced by medical and health professional faculty at the University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University and Ohio State University. Its Ask An Expert feature provides high-quality answers to common medical questions.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

On average, right-handed people live 9 years longer than left-handed people do.

BEST MEDICINE

An orthopedic surgeon was moving to a new office with the help of his staff. One of the nurses was charged with driving the display skeleton over. She buckled it in the passenger's seat.

On the way to the new office, her bony passenger drew stares from other drivers. At a traffic light, she felt compelled to roll down her window and yell, "I'm delivering him to my doctor's office."

A driver in another car leaned out his window and yelled back: "I hate to tell you lady, but I think it's too late!"

## NEVER SAY DIET

The world's speed record for eating gelatin desserts is held by Steve Lakind, who consumed seven 16-ounce portions (7 pounds) in three minutes.

## STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

From ancient times until the 1700s, powdered mummies were believed to contain special medicinal qualities that healed wounds and cured conditions such as epilepsy and vertigo.

But one had to be careful. In 1691, French writer Pierre Pomet offered some advice on procuring top-quality powdered mummy. The good stuff, he said, was "of a good shining black, not full of bones or dirt, of a good smell and which being burnt does not stink of pitch."

Beware, Pomet advised, of "white mummies," which he claimed were made in parts of Africa by killing and burying hapless travelers in desert sand.

## PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Automatonophobia - a fear of ventriloquist dummies

## GET ME THAT. STAT!

According to some estimates, the United States will experience a shortage of more than 200,000 doctors by 2030, almost one-quarter of the 850,000 doctors currently in practice.

## METABOLIC SYNDROME

Canadian researchers found that postmenopausal women who regularly performed moderate or vigorous physical activity were less likely than inactive women to develop a complex of related disorders known as metabolic syndrome. The syndrome includes excessive weight, particularly around the midsection; high cholesterol and triglyceride levels; high blood pressure and blood sugar.

## IRRITABLE BOWEL PROBLEMS

Patients with irritable bowel syndrome also may need to be concerned about depression, fibromyalgia, and migraine. In a study of the medical claims of nearly 100,00 IBS sufferers and 27,400 people who did not have the disorder, patients with IBS were 60 percent more likely to have at least one or more of the three other conditions, says Consumer Reports on Health. Previous research has suggested that all four conditions share an underlying biological mechanism.

*WellNews: No laboratory lullaby by Scott\_LaFee*