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## Kids likely to develop learning disabilities due to repeat anesthesia

Rupali Gupta · Monday, October 3rd, 2011



Repeated exposure to anesthesia to kids below the age of 2 is most likely to cause cognitive problems and increase the risk of learning disabilities e.g. dyslexia, as concluded by a study conducted by Randall P. Flick, MD, MPH, of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minneapolis and colleagues. They further noted that virtually all general anesthetics kill brain cells in young primates.

### What did study involve?

Flick's group studied a group of 350 children who received anesthesia before age 2 and compared them with a control group of 700 children, who didn't have early anesthesia exposure, from among 8,548 children born from 1976 through 1982 in Rochester. The two groups were matched for gender, birth weight, gestational age, mother's education level, and birth date.

### What were findings of the study?

The study revealed that:



- 21.3% of those who weren't exposed to anesthesia by age 2, developed learning disabilities by age 19 in comparison to 23.6% of those exposed who were exposed once, and 36.6% of those who were exposed at least twice.

- For multiple exposures, every type of learning disability was significantly elevated, from 87% for mathematics-related problems to 89% for reading disabilities and 93% for problems with written language.

The researchers noted that most of the anesthesia exposure was to halothane (Fluothane), which is no longer in widespread use. Also, effects such as hypoxia or hypocapnia from monitoring without pulse oximetry in the earlier era could have accounted for some of the findings as well.

Via

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