

# All Our Families Study

*Understanding Development Across the Lifecourse*

Spring 2020

## Greetings from the All Our Families Study

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge that this has been a very difficult spring due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the economy, and the uncertain future in regard to jobs, healthcare, education, etc. We recognize that COVID-19 has had worldwide impact on all of us and we are facing issues that are new and unfamiliar. Our thoughts are with our participants and their loved ones and we appreciate that many of you have family and friends in places far away, making the experience even more unsettling. Our website will continue to feature **regular updates on resources and tips** for you and your family.



We have completed the collection of our 8-year survey data, **Eight is Great!** – thank you for your very important contributions. As always, we look forward to the thoughts and comments you have shared through the surveys; we are always interested in hearing how your families are developing and changing.

In this newsletter, we will provide some study and team updates. In our **Ask an Expert** section, we have profiled Dr. Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen, a researcher whose scientific interests lie in sleep and sleep behaviour. In our **Research to Real Life** segment, we are launching our exciting new infographic that summarize our study findings to date.

We also have important updates on the upcoming research plan and surveys. And finally, there will be some information on current research initiatives related to **COVID-19 and its impact on families**.

Our newsletters are published twice a year, but you can find past newsletters, study updates and other information on our website, or by following us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Again, I want to personally thank each of our participants for your contributions to the study.

Stay safe,

Suzanne Tough

## Research Participation Opportunity: Owerko Neurodevelopmental Research Recruitment Database



Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD) are a group of conditions that describe developmental concerns that start in childhood. These include conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and intellectual disability. However, there is still much researchers don't understand about them. For this reason, there are many studies looking at different aspects of NDDs by different research groups at the University of Calgary. For families wanting to help contribute to this research, the **Owerko Research Recruitment**

**database** was developed to connect researchers and families affected by NDD to further knowledge of developmental disabilities in children.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE RECRUITMENT DATABASE?

Improve investigation of NDD research questions posed by researchers, clinicians and families by providing a streamlined way of recruiting interested participants

Give families or community organizations opportunities to participate in research that has been determined to have a good likelihood of having impact on knowledge and treatment of child developmental disability.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Families that have children with developmental disorders can sign up for the recruitment database by providing contact information and information on developmental concerns. This will be given to researchers that have a study that may be relevant and they will contact families to invite them to participate. Families can also learn about research studies on the [research studies page](#). Families will not be contacted more than once every three months and can withdraw their name at any time.

## NEXT STEPS

This study has been approved by the Calgary Conjoint Health Ethics Board (REB18-1194). For more information, or to be included in the project, please contact Dr. Kara Murias at [Kara.Murias@AlbertaHealthServices.ca](mailto:Kara.Murias@AlbertaHealthServices.ca).

## Ask an Expert: Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen, Ph.D., R. Psych.

We are pleased to invite Dr. Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen as our Ask an Expert in this newsletter to address some commonly asked questions about child and adolescent's sleep. Lianne's research focuses on factors that impact achieving optimal health; with a particular interest in the contributions of sleep to overall well-being. Lianne has worked closely with the All Our Families team, has contributed in both areas of research as well as questionnaire development as a content expert.

### Q: "Should I let my preteen sleep in late on weekends?"

Generally, sleeping late on the weekends isn't recommended because it disrupts the sleep routine. From a mental health perspective, getting an extra half an hour every night has a lot more benefit than sleeping in for 3 hours on the weekend. That being said, sleeping in for an hour probably won't hurt as long as the general normal routine stays the same.

### Q: "Can the onset of puberty cause sleep problems?"

Puberty often causes a large change in the timing of circadian rhythms – said another way teens get sleepy later. Before puberty, teens usually feel sleepy around 8 or 9 pm. After puberty, they often start to feel sleepy between 10 or 11 pm. This is called a "sleep phase delay" and although parents and teens may fear it is insomnia, it is often just a normative change that requires some shifts in bed and wake routines.



### Q: "Is sleepwalking normal?"

Sleepwalking is relatively common and occurs more frequently in children of younger ages. Sleepwalking is precipitated by periods of sleep deprivation and so the treatment often involves setting bedtime routines and ensuring that children are getting enough sleep. Also, if your child sleepwalks make sure they are safe, for example, that the house is locked and their room is oriented safely (no top bunks!).

Children usually have no memory of sleepwalking. Instead of waking them, which can cause agitation and fear, if you find your child sleepwalking just walk them back to their bed. Don't make too big a deal about it the next day, some kids become anxious or embarrassed about the fact that they sleepwalk and it really is out of their control.



**Q: "How can I help my preteen sleep better? What are some things my family can do to sleep better?"**

A structured sleep routine is one of the best ways to sleep better. Help your family maintain a regular bedtime and waketime, even on the weekends!

Before bed, implement a short relaxing routine that is the same every night. Some common examples include a bath or practicing a brief relaxation exercise followed by brushing teeth and then reading for a few minutes.

This last one can be hard but it's vital - only use the bed for sleeping! We want to build strong associations between the bed and getting sleepy – things that people commonly do like watching TV or checking a smartphone should be done somewhere else so that they don't become associated with being in bed.

**Q: "How much sleep does a preteen need? Why is it important to get good sleep?"**

On average preteens need to sleep 8 to 10 hours per night. Most kids report that they are not meeting this with only 15% getting 8.5 hours on school nights.

Sleep should be a priority throughout the lifespan but particularly during the preteen and teen years. Good sleep is the foundation for physical and mental health. Getting an adequate number of hours of refreshing sleep every night is associated with lower risk for depression, higher academic achievement, less substance use, lower risk of obesity and fewer car accidents.

Although sleep can become de-prioritized by busy parents and children, it really is the building block for learning and for physical restoration. Prioritizing sleep can be one of the best things that families can do to maintain their health.

*Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen, Ph.D., R. Psych. is a researcher and Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Calgary, and previously held a Professorship of Child Health Psychology at Alberta Children's Hospital.*

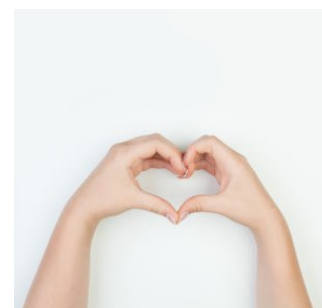
## Mother's Day & COVID-19

Mother's Day this year may look very differently due to the COVID-19 outbreak. So how to celebrate the women of influence (mothers, sisters, aunts, friends) in our lives in this time of physical distancing and self-isolation?

**If you already share a home:**

- Plan a gardening or yard day – if it's not snowing (because in Calgary, who knows?).
- Share a favorite movie together.
- Bake a cake or a favourite treat.
- Have a backyard picnic if it's nice, or a movie marathon if it's raining.
- Take a walk together, or maybe a bike ride.

**If you are apart or isolating – practice physical distancing, not social isolation!**



If possible and safe; plan for a drop-off of something special – homemade muffins or cookies, or a casserole.

- Create a digital 'scrapbook' of photos that can be shared via email.
- Use technology to keep connected; a Skype, Zoom or Facetime call.
- Play a game online together.
- If you both have the same streaming platform, synchronize it so you can watch a movie together.

### Self-care tips for all of us to remember:

- As much as you are able, create a routine and stick to it.
- Ensure you are getting enough sleep.
- Get out of your pajamas and start the day! It will improve your frame of mind, and studies show it quickens healing time for minor illnesses.
- Limit the amount of time spent watching the news to one update a day.
- Go online and try to master a new skill. Origami, anyone? Teach your kids!
- Check in with someone who always can make you laugh.
- Tackle a task that gives you a sense of control and accomplishment – for example, de-cluttering a closet or room, organizing photos, sorting through old papers and receipts.
- Avoid social media if you find it is causing you to be fearful and powerless.
- Recognize that this is an unusual time for everyone, and anxiety is a normal and expected response. Talk to others about your feelings.

On our All Our Families website, we have **some resources** posted for you and your children that you may find helpful.

## Let's Talk About Youth

### Youth Survey Video

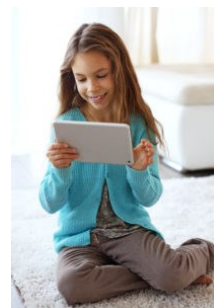
As you have read in earlier newsletters, the All Our Families study will invite the index child of each participant into the study with a questionnaire geared towards youth. The invitation will be consented by the (parent) participant, and a link to a short video explaining the questionnaire will be sent to the youth.

In a 'kid-friendly' manner, this video will explain the origin and purpose of the study, how the mothers were recruited, and how the youth can now participate.

A big shout-out to all the youth who volunteered to participate in the video, to Brittany Willsie, our awesome videographer, and the AOF staff who pulled the project together. We look forward to sharing!

### Maternal & Child Questionnaire Launch Delayed

August 2020 would have normally marked the official launch of the 12-year survey, coinciding with the birthdate of the first All Our Families recruits. However, after serious and thoughtful consideration, the team has decided to delay the launch of this survey until at least fall 2021, making it our 13 year follow-up with participants. In the meanwhile, stay tuned for some important and specific surveys about how families are managing in a time of turmoil. We will be back to our regular approach as normalcy returns to our lives. As always, any questions, concerns or feedback can be directed to our All Our Families email at [allourfamilies@ucalgary.ca](mailto:allourfamilies@ucalgary.ca).



## Staff News

### Working from Home

Due to COVID-19, our research team is now working remotely from home but we are continuing our All Our Families work, developing our [next participant follow-up](#) and continuing our research in maternal mental health and child development.

### Meet Our Research Assistants

Over the past two years, some of our participants might have received a phone call from the All Our Families team. Ever wonder who is behind that friendly voice on the phone, calling to check in, talk to you about the surveys, and answer any questions? Meet the current Research Assistants working on the study, entering data, contacting our moms and gaining valuable work and study experience!



#### Rachel Pagaling

Rachel Pagaling joined the All Our Families team in 2018 as a research assistant contacting and checking in with participants. Rachel received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Art History at Mount Royal University. Rachel is currently completing her MSc in the School and Applied Child Psychology program at UCalgary. Rachel is passionate about research and clinical practice with children and youth with neurodevelopmental disorders, learning disorders, and complex mental health needs.



#### Nadia DiMarzo

Nadia DiMarzo joined the All Our Families Study in 2018 as a research assistant, contacting and following up with participants. Nadia is currently completing her Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) degree, majoring in Biomedical Science at the University of Calgary. Nadia became interested in community health through volunteer trips to Kenya and Ecuador, and working with Syrian refugee children. She is hoping to pursue a career in medical research.



#### David Wudel

David joined the All Our Families team in June of 2015 as an administrative assistant in our new lab at the Owerko Centre. David holds a degree in Public Relations from Mount Royal University and spent four years working with Cerebral Palsy Kids and Families prior to joining the team.



David is accompanied by his four-legged friend, Jim, a service dog provided by the Lions Foundation of Canada. Jim is an indispensable friend who assists David with a multitude of tasks in the workplace and at home. He even helps David prepare questionnaires sometimes. So if your questionnaire was slightly ruffled when you received it, you may have been a recipient of David and Jim's hard work.

## Team Celebration at 4Cats

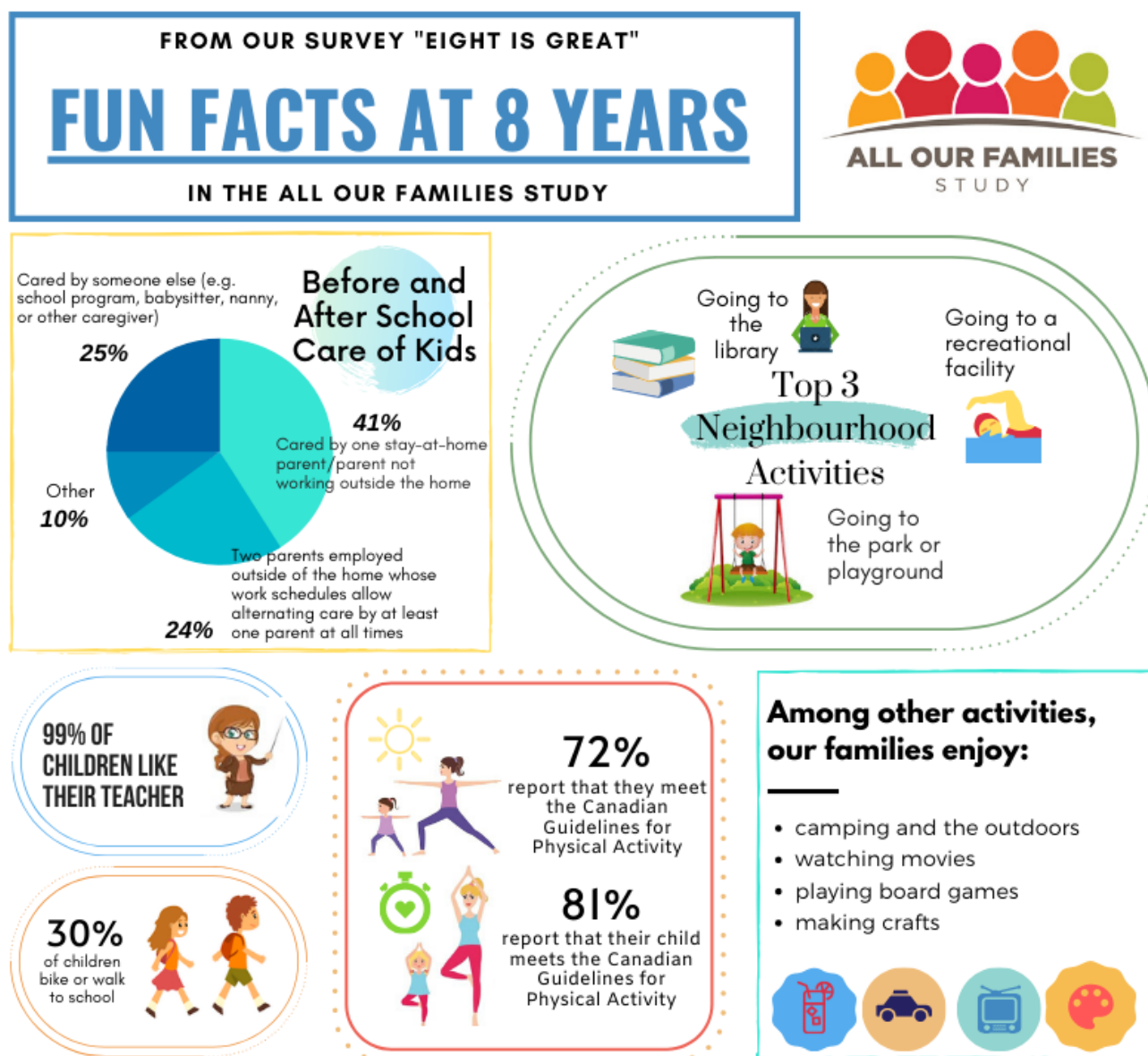
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations on physical distancing, our team celebrated a team member's recent wedding by spending a wonderful afternoon together in a splatter paint workshop. What a great way to be expressive and create our own art. Rumour has it that one of us is hanging our masterpiece at home in a guest bathroom!



## Study Updates

### Wrap Up of Eight is Great!

Early this year, AOF wrapped up data collection for the 8 year participant follow-up survey, Eight is Great. We want to give a big thanks to our families who have taken the time to complete the questionnaire. With their help, we received nearly 2,000 completed surveys back and our team is ready to study some important research questions around middle childhood. Here are a few fun facts we've learned from our participants in this round of follow-up.



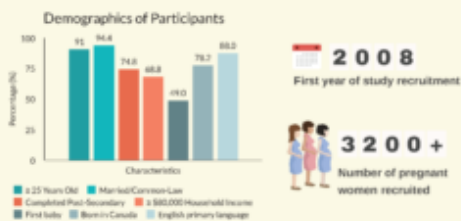
Results from the All Our Families Cohort

# WHO WE ARE



## Research to Real Life: Who We Are

All Our Families (AOF) is a community-based, longitudinal pregnancy cohort in Calgary, Alberta designed to understand relationships between life experiences, maternal and family well-being, and child development.



### Our Findings Show:



**COPING**  
Social support and increased reproductive optimism are two tools that can help women cope with mental health challenges.



**SOCIAL SUPPORT**  
Social support has the biggest impact on alleviating anxiety and depression symptoms in pregnancy.



**FAMILY PLANNING**  
75% of women planned their pregnancy.

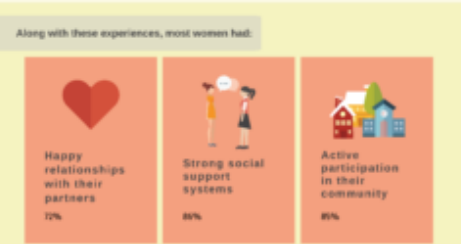
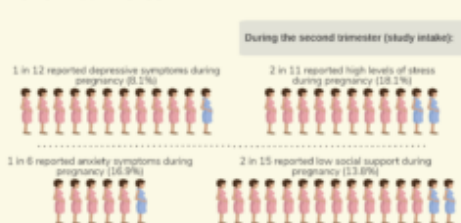


**STRATEGIES**  
Lifetime stress increased the risk for early delivery, however, among those with emotional or mental coping strategies, this risk of early delivery was reduced.



**PEER PROGRAMMES**  
Group prenatal care, prenatal education and peer support programmes have the potential to improve social support.

### Well-Being & Pregnancy



We are learning that across economic circumstances women can experience challenges to mental health and coping. Importantly, most women are in happy relationships with their partners, having strong social support systems, and use community resources such as attending parenting classes, story time at the library, and places of worship. Social supports and community resources improve well-being for mom and baby.



The All Our Families cohort data can be accessed through the data repository at Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE) at PolicyWise for Children & Families. For more information, contact PolicyWise. <https://policywise.com/sage/>

One of our exciting projects over the past year has been to combine results published over the past 10 years from the All Our Families cohort data into a summarized format. Here is one of the infographics explaining Who We Are and what we've learned from our participants.

## Launch of COVID-19 Cross-Sectional Survey

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, we are developing surveys to help us understand your experiences during this time. A cross-sectional survey is designed to capture a population response at a certain point in time, this will be similar to the 2013 Flood Survey. We are interested in how this outbreak has impacted your health, your family circumstances, job security, children's schooling, among other areas. As our work unfolds, we will contact you this spring, and hopefully again at a later date to see how you and your family are doing over time. As always, your contributions continue to help make the AOF study one of the largest and most unique cohort studies in Canada. This survey will be emailed directly to our participants' emails, so keep an eye out!



**Acknowledgments**  
We would like to extend gratitude to our AOF participants.

**Data Access**  
The All Our Families cohort data can be accessed through the data repository at Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE) at PolicyWise for Children & Families. For more information, contact PolicyWise. <https://policywise.com/sage/>