

The All Our Babies Study NEWSLETTER



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This summer, as a community, we went through some difficult times, here in Calgary, in High River, in Canmore and all the other places that experienced the effects of the flooding. We also saw throughout the crisis how strong and resilient we are as a community. Our children are also strong and resilient most of the time, but sometimes stressful life events or environments can affect them too. Now that the waters are down and rebuilding is underway, we want to know more about how the community can support parents and children the next time we face a natural disaster, here or elsewhere.

Since the flood, we have been working on a survey, included in this package, to help us

understand your experiences during the flood. We've also been busy developing our next survey that will soon be ready to send out to families as children turn 5. A lot of planning and thought goes into these surveys, because we want to ask just the right questions without taking up too much of your time. We carefully select and edit questions and test out the format to ensure it makes sense before we package it up to send to you.

We try to make it as easy as possible for you to answer our surveys, and we thank you for the time and effort you put into them. We hope you will give us another few minutes of your time now to answer this flood survey and continue helping us to understand how your children are growing and developing, even in the midst of a natural disaster. And as always, please keep in touch with us and let us know if you are moving!

Cheers,
Suzanne Tough

Conversations with the All Our Babies Team

We love hearing from you, and we thought many of you might share the same thoughts and questions. So we wanted to share and address a few of them here.

You Said: "Does anyone ever answer 'Yes' to the being rested questions? I think they're funny, and I laugh every time I read them."

We Say: In fact, fewer than half of participants say they are often or always rested. Exhaustion is definitely a shared experience of parenthood!

You Said: "I sometimes desire more guidance in parenting issues and am unsure where to access good information/tools."

We Say: Some resources can be found through Parent Link here: www.parentlinkalberta.ca Another useful resource is Alberta Family Wellness: www.albertafamilywellness.org

You Said: "Thanks for the continued opportunity to reflect on my care and experiences as well as development as the time has passed. I love any chance to brag about my amazing kid!"

We Say: You're welcome!! Thank you for continuing to participate in our study!

You Said: "I love being a mom - a working mom. Some women can stay at home but I personally feel I'm a better mother when I work."

You Said: "I have the best job in the world [a stay-at-home mom]. I don't miss a professional career at all."

We Say: Most AOB participants, 63%, did return to work at 12 months. Lots of you returned with decreased hours. At home or at work, whatever works best for the family is often best for the child.

You Said: "I enjoy being a mother even though it can be busy and overwhelming at times. I did suffer from postpartum depression, but I am in the process of receiving counselling to tackle the issues."

We Say: Postpartum depression is not an uncommon experience for women. About 23% of our participants have struggled with PPD at some point, even at one year. Accessing community supports can be a key part of dealing with PPD. AHS offers some resources through Access Mental Health at 403-943-1500 or through Families Matter programs. Find more information at: www.familiesmatter.ca/programs/family-mental-health

If you have any questions or suggestions about the study, please **CONTACT US:**
allourbabies@albertahealthservices.ca / (403) 955-7539

THE LEGACY OF LONGITUDINAL COHORTS

As the All Our Babies Study heads into the fifth year of research, it may seem that we've been around for a while. But actually, in relation to other studies, we are ourselves just babies. In fact, one of the earliest research studies to follow children from the time they were born began in the Great Britain in 1946 as the National Survey of Health and Development Birth Cohort and continues today even after participants have turned 65 (www.nshd.mrc.ac.uk).

Long term research studies like this one are recognized as invaluable for understanding how what happens in early life can be related to adult health and well-being. For example, in 1989, Dr. David Barker studied birth records and current health of 16,000 adults. He found that people who had a low birth weight were at higher risk of heart disease in middle age. At first, few believed him, but now many researchers confirm that pregnancy and early childhood are very important stages that can impact the rest of a person's life. This research launched a field of study, now called "Developmental Origins of Health and Disease," or DOHaD.

Many studies in Europe, Canada, and Australia have spent years tracking children's growth and development so that we can find out the long term effects of low birth weight, alcohol and cigarette exposure, breastfeeding, and many other factors. Canada has recently stopped following up children in its National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, which

makes your participation even more critical as we try and understand how families and children are doing in a contemporary, high technology age.

You too are part of this legacy as participants of the All Our Babies longitudinal cohort. From your participation, we are learning about the impact that mental wellbeing in pregnancy can have. We have also studied flu vaccination use, an innovative type of group prenatal care, language development and many more topics still being explored.

We are working to share what we have learned with you as participants by providing newsletters and journal articles. We also share our findings with others as we present at conferences all over the globe. However, our greatest efforts are focussed on sharing these results close to home where they can benefit Albertans and Canadians across the country. Already, we have helped several group prenatal care programs start in various locations. Alberta Health Services is also now preparing to implement this option in primary care settings in Calgary. You are part of a long legacy of longitudinal cohorts and we value the data you provide and honour your contribution by putting it to work in this province.

Meet the Newest Members of the All Our Babies Team



Shannon MacDonald is a child health nurse, who has worked in such far flung locations as Ghana, Indonesia, Scotland, North Carolina, and Newfoundland (one

of her favourite places). She now calls Edmonton her home, where she lives with her husband and two young children. Shannon's research focuses on infectious diseases of childhood and supporting parents in making well-informed health care decisions for their families. When she is not at work, Shannon enjoys reading and swimming, but she really spends most of her spare time as taxi-driver for her kids' after school activities. One of her favourite places is her husband's family farm in Nova Scotia, where her city kids get a taste of country life every summer.



children. She is currently working on her PhD with the study researching key parenting behaviours in the earliest years of a child's life that can best support children's mental health. She also assists the study in the I.T. processing of AOB data. Her friends would describe her as funny, courageous, determined, and supportive. When not working on her studies, Cathy enjoys cheering on her kids at their sports, cross-stitching and golfing and dreams of travelling back to Australia to see much loved friends and walk on the beach.

Cathy Pritchard is an Australian mum of 3 who worked in computing for the first 15 years of her career. An interest in psychology grew into a career change after she had



Ingunn Benediktsson is a Masters student at the Faculty of medicine, where she is studying social epidemiology with Dr. Suzanne Tough.

Before joining the All Our Babies team, Ingunn spent four years in Toronto at the Glenn Gould School of Music, and has travelled across Canada and Europe playing concerts. Ingunn's research focuses on maternal mental health, and identifying women and families at risk. In between writing papers and dashing between meetings, Ingunn has also mastered the art of Lego building and superhero play with her spunky and imaginative four year old son. In her free time Ingunn loves to hike and ski and this past summer crossed an item off her bucket list and successfully navigated the infamous ladders and mud pits of the West Coast Trail.