The Independent (London)

**February** 23, 2016 Tuesday   
First Edition

Children of depressed parents 'at risk of being fussy eaters'  
  
**BYLINE:** JONATHAN OWEN  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 15  
  
**LENGTH:** 341 words

Children whose parents are anxious or depressed are more likely to become fussy eaters, according to a study.

Researchers discovered a clear link between the mental well-being of mothers and fathers and the attitudes of young children to food. Three- and four-year-olds were at greater risk of becoming fussy eaters if their parents suffered **anxiety** during pregnancy or in the first couple of years of their**child's** life, they found.

The refusal of children to eat certain foods, resulting in a restricted diet, causes major concerns among parents and has been linked to weight issues and behavioural problems in children.

The study was led by a team of researchers based at the Erasmus MC University Medical Centre, Rotterdam, who examined the **eating** habits of more than 4,700 children born in the Netherlands between 2002 and 2006.

Parents completed questionnaires to assess their levels of **anxiety** and **depression** during mid-pregnancy and again when their **child** was three years old. They also reported on their children's**eating** patterns at the ages of three and four. About 30 per cent of the children were classified as fussy eaters by the age of three.

"We observed that maternal and paternal internalising problems were prospectively associated with**fussy** **eating** in pre-schoolers," the researchers said. "Clinicians should be aware that not only severe**anxiety** and **depression**, but also milder forms of internalising problems, can affect **child eating**behaviour."

The discovery that symptoms of women during pregnancy predicted **fussy** **eating** in their four-year-old children "strongly suggests that the direction of the associations with mothers' antenatal symptoms is from mother to **child,**" the academics said.

Links between the **anxiety** of fathers with the way their children refuse foods can be explained by parenting factors, according to the researchers. "Possibly, fathers' **anxiety** affects children's **fussyeating** by controlling feeding practices such as pressure to eat," they said.

The study was published in the Archives of Disease in Childhood.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH