

## **CHILD Study team to study how prenatal artificial sweetener intake affects infant weight**

**HAMILTON, ON (28 June 2017)** — A multi-institutional CHILD Study research team involving the University of Manitoba and the University of Calgary has been awarded \$75,000 by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH), to investigate how consuming artificial sweeteners during pregnancy influences infant weight gain.

“In [2016](#), using CHILD Study data, we discovered that if a mother consumes diet drinks on a daily basis during her pregnancy, her infant has an increased risk of becoming overweight,” says [Dr. Meghan Azad](#), an assistant professor in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba and a research scientist at the Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM).

“The IHDCYH award [announced today](#) will allow us to investigate how a mom’s artificial sweetener intake during pregnancy affects her infant’s microbiome and metabolism, which could explain the increased risk of obesity we have observed. Ultimately, we hope this research will help inform nutrition recommendations for pregnant women and contribute to new strategies for childhood obesity prevention.”

The research is one of [25 funded projects](#) that will use existing data and biospecimens to answer novel research questions and test innovative hypotheses that have the potential to improve reproductive, maternal and child health outcomes. In total, IHDCYH will invest \$1.85 million across the country.

[Dr. Marie-Claire Arrieta](#), an assistant professor in the Departments of Pediatrics, and Physiology & Pharmacology at the University of Calgary is a microbiome researcher and co-Principal Investigator for the new CHILD grant.

“Childhood obesity rates in Canada have doubled since 1970, with nearly one in three children now classified as overweight or obese,” says Dr. Arrieta. “Over the same period, the consumption of artificial sweeteners has steadily increased among adults, children, and pregnant women. We are delighted that the Government of Canada, through the CIHR, has invested in the opportunity to leverage CHILD Study data to improve our understanding of how the maternal diet influences infant weight—this demonstrates the strategic value of CHILD Study data as a platform for novel health research.”

### **About the CHILD Study and AllerGen NCE**

Funded by CIHR and the Allergy, Genes and Environment ([AllerGen](#)) Network, the CHILD Study is collecting a vast range of health, lifestyle and environmental exposure information from more than 3,500 mothers and children from pregnancy to school age and beyond. The study spans four provinces (BC, AB, MB and ON), involving over 140 multidisciplinary researchers, students and research staff. St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton hosts the CHILD Study’s National Coordinating Centre.

AllerGen NCE Inc. is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life of people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. Funded by Innovation, Science and

Economic Development Canada through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program, the Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton, ON.

Watch the [CHILD Study video](#).

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