

Topics about: Parental separation/divorce

### **3- Father absence and depressive symptoms in adolescence: findings from a UK cohort.**

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### **Father absence and depressive symptoms in adolescence: findings from a UK cohort.**

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#### **Source**

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#### **Abstract**

##### **BACKGROUND:**

Previous studies suggest a link between parental separation or divorce and risk of depression in adolescence. There are, however, few studies that have prospectively examined the effects of timing of biological father absence on risk for depressive symptoms in adolescence while controlling for a range of confounding factors. **Method** We examine the association between father absence occurring in early (the first 5 years) and middle childhood (5-10 years) and adolescent depressive symptoms in a sample comprising 5631 children from the UK-based Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC). Self-reported depressive symptoms at 14 years were assessed using the Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ). Father absence was assessed from maternal questionnaires completed at regular intervals from the birth of the study child up to 10 years.

##### **RESULTS:**

There was evidence for an association between father absence in early childhood and increased odds of depressive symptoms at 14 years. This association was stronger in girls than in boys and remained after adjusting for a range of socio-economic, maternal and familial confounders assessed prior to the father's departure. Conversely, there was no evidence for an association between father absence in middle childhood and depressive symptoms at 14 years.

##### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Father absence in early childhood increases risk for adolescent depressive symptoms, particularly in girls. Future research should be aimed at identifying possible biological and psychosocial mechanisms linking father absence to depressive symptomatology to enable the development of family-based early prevention and intervention programmes targeting young children at risk.

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