

Fat babies slower to develop motor skills

Triangle Business Journal by James Gallagher
Date: Tuesday, March 30, 2010, 10:23am EDT

Fat babies may be cute, but the extra weight they're carrying may slow their ability to crawl or walk, reports a new study out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Researchers in the Gillings School of Global Public Health found that overweight infants were slower to develop motor skills than thinner babies.

Fatter babies were 1.8 times more likely to score low on the Psychomotor Development Index Test, which indicates motor skill development, than thinner babies. And infants with high subcutaneous fat, more commonly known as rolls of fat, more than twice as likely to score poorly.

"This is concerning because children with motor skill delays may be less physically active and thus less likely to explore the environment beyond arm's reach," said Meghan Slining, a nutrition doctoral student in the Gillings School and lead author of the study.

Slining's conclusion was based on observations of 217 African-American, first-time mothers participating in a study to determine how parenting and infant feeding relate to the risk of babies becoming overweight.

Between 2003 and 2007, researchers measured the children and their motor skills at the ages of three, six, nine, 12 and 18 months.

The study, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the Mead Johnson Children's Nutrition Small Research Grants Program at UNC, was published online in *The Journal of Pediatrics*.