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Exercise beneficial for women with gestational diabetes

Tue, 05 Feb 2013

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Pregnant women who develop gestational **diabetes mellitus** (GDM) can reduce the adverse affects of the disease by regularly exercising during the second half of their **pregnancy**.

New research published in the British Journal of Sports **Medicine** shows that regular moderate-intensity **exercise** during the latter stages of pregnancy can improve foetal and maternal outcomes for women who develop GDM.

For the study, Jonatan Ruiz of the University of Granada, Spain, and colleagues assessed the benefits of moderate **exercise** three times a week from weeks 10-12 to weeks 38-39 of **pregnancy** compared to usual **care** for 510 women who were **healthy** and diabetes-free at the start of the research.

Just under a fifth of the exercise group developed GDM – based on World Health Organization (WHO) criteria - during their pregnancy, compared to 28 per cent of the control group.

While this difference was non-significant, the researchers found that the risk of macrosomia, a common foetal **complication** associated with **gestational diabetes**, was a statistically significant 58 per cent lower for GDM-affected women in the exercise group.

Exercising women who developed GDM also had a 1.76-fold increased risk for having a child with macrosomia – a condition linked with significant maternal and neonatal morbidity - compared with those without GDM. The elevated risk was considerably higher for women who received standard pregnancy care.

In addition, women with GDM in the exercise group were also a significant 34 per cent less likely than **diabetes**-free individuals in the same group to require an acute or elective cesarean delivery compared with the control group.

"Taken together, our findings provide further support for the benefits of moderate-intensity exercise, and for promoting supervised exercise interventions during pregnancy," said Ruiz.

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