
PRESS RELEASE

Sitting down for long periods when pregnant linked to weight gain and depression

Women suffering from symptoms of depression during pregnancy are more likely to sit down for long periods of time in the second trimester, putting them at risk of greater weight gain and contracting gestational diabetes, according to a new study presented today at the [Society for Endocrinology annual conference](#) in Edinburgh.

The research highlights the need to address women's physical and mental wellbeing from the early stages of pregnancy to help reduce the health risks associated with sedentary behaviour.

Sedentary behaviour has previously been linked to diabetes, obesity, heart disease and mental health problems, but its impact on the health of pregnant women is unclear. There are no UK guidelines for the intensity and duration of physical activity needed to keep pregnant women healthy.

In this study, researchers from the University of Warwick asked 1263 pregnant women to report on their level of physical activity and emotional wellbeing – in the first trimester of pregnancy and then again in the late stages of the second.

They found that overall, women with self-reported depression symptoms were more likely to sit down for longer periods – despite accounting for their BMI, age and socio-economic status. Pregnant women who spent more time sitting down in the second trimester also did less amounts of moderate or vigorous physical activity, and sedentary women gained significant amounts of weight between the first and second trimester.

Finally, the researchers also found that sedentary pregnant women had higher blood glucose levels around 28 weeks of gestation, putting them at higher risk of developing gestational diabetes.

“Pregnant women could benefit from early intervention to improve their physical and mental health and reduce the risks associated with sedentary behaviour”, said lead author of the study Dr Nithya Sukumar at Warwick Medical School. “Gestational diabetes can increase the risk of birth complications for the mother and baby and so it is important we minimise this risk by reducing the time that pregnant women spend sitting down”.

Co-lead author Dr Ponnusamy Saravanan said: “Encouraging women to take breaks from sitting down might be an easier public health policy to implement than increasing their physical activity during pregnancy. We believe reducing the sitting time has the potential to reduce pregnant women's risk of gestational diabetes and reduce the metabolic risk factors of their newborns”.

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Notes for editors

1. The study *Longer duration of sitting down in pregnancy is associated with gestational diabetes, greater weight gain and depressive symptoms* is a poster presented by Dr Nithya Sukumar at the Society for Endocrinology's annual conference. Please note this is a conference abstract, and this study has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal.
2. For press enquiries, please contact the Society for Endocrinology press office:

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3. The Society for Endocrinology's annual conference is held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre from 2-4 November 2015. The conference features some of the world's leading basic and clinical endocrinologists who present their work. Journalists wishing to attend should contact the Society for Endocrinology press office using the details above. The scientific programme is available on the [conference webpage](#).
4. The Society for Endocrinology is a UK-based membership organisation representing a global community of scientists, clinicians and nurses who work with hormones. Together we aim to improve public health by advancing endocrine education and research, and engaging wider audiences with the science of hormones.
www.endocrinology.org