Simple measures may curb excessive weight gain in pregnancy

July 20 2012

A walking program and healthy meal plan kept moms-to-be from gaining extra pounds during study.

(HealthDay) -- Healthy eating and low or moderate levels of exercise during pregnancy can help a woman avoid excessive weight gain and may reduce her infant's risk of being overweight or obese later in life, new research indicates.

The study included 49 women at 16 to 20 weeks of pregnancy who were assigned to either a low- or moderate-intensity walking program. Both groups also followed a meal plan based on guidelines given to expectant mothers with gestational diabetes.

The women were compared with another group of pregnant women who were not assigned to any exercise or diet programs (the "control" group).

All the women in the study were deemed to have a normal, healthy weight before their pregnancy, the researchers noted in the report, which was published in the August issue of the journal Medicine *& Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Compared to the women in the control group, those in the two exercise/healthy-eating groups gained less weight during pregnancy and were less likely to gain excessive weight, the investigators found. Within two months of delivery, 28 percent of women in the moderate-intensity exercise program were within about 4.4 pounds of their pre-pregnancy weight, compared with 7 percent of those in the control group.

Babies born to women in all the groups had similar birth weights, which suggests that preventing excessive weight gain during pregnancy does not influence infant birth weight, the study authors noted in a news release from the American College of Sports Medicine.

The researchers pointed out, however, that pregnancy is an important period in determining a child's health later in life and preventing excessive weight gain in pregnancy may reduce a child's long-term risk for obesity.

"Women benefit greatly from being active throughout their pregnancies and physical activity is strongly recommended by professional organizations," lead author Stephanie-May Ruchat, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, said in the news release. "However, most pregnant women remain inactive and this may be contributing to excessive gestational weight gain, which is associated with an increased risk for future obesity in both the mother and offspring."

"Myths about nutrition in pregnancy can also be misleading. For example, mothers-to-be should be warned that 'eating for two' does not

mean they need to eat twice as much, but that they should eat twice as healthy," Ruchat noted. "An increase of only 200 to 500 kilocalories per day in the second and third trimester is recommended, depending on the body-mass index of the women prior to pregnancy. The heavier the woman is, the fewer extra calories per day she will need during pregnancy."

Before beginning any new diet or exercise regimen, experts recommend discussing it with your doctor or other health professional.

More information: The Nemours Foundation offers tips for staying healthy during pregnancy.

Copyright © 2012 HealthDay. All rights reserved.

Citation: Simple measures may curb excessive weight gain in pregnancy (2012, July 20) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-simple-curb-excessive-weight-gain.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.