

Exercise effective in helping pregnant women kick the habit

September 23 2008

Exercise could be a useful tool in helping pregnant women to give up smoking, according to new research published today in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*. Despite the warnings, 17% of women in the UK and 20% of women in the US still admit to smoking during pregnancy. This often leads to lower birth weight, higher infant mortality, and is linked to learning difficulties, problem behaviour and asthma in childhood.

Most attempts to give up smoking unaided end in failure. The most successful methods of stopping smoking involve a combination of nicotine replacement and behavioural therapy, but there are concerns that nicotine replacement may harm the fetus. Exercise can reduce the cravings experienced by smokers and there is some evidence to show that it can help non-pregnant women to quit.

Michael Ussher and colleagues from St George's, University of London conducted two pilot studies into whether physical exercise could feasibly help pregnant women quit smoking.

For both studies, pregnant women over 18, who smoked at least a cigarette a day, were recruited 12 to 20 weeks into pregnancy. In one study, women did supervised exercise once a week for six weeks; in the other, women did two sessions of exercise a week for six weeks, then one session a week for three weeks. The participants were also encouraged to do additional exercise on their own and all received advice and counselling towards stopping smoking and becoming more

active.

A quarter of the 32 women recruited for the studies gave up smoking before giving birth. This is similar to the number of non-pregnant smokers that quit using nicotine replacement. Furthermore, participants reported other positive benefits including weight loss, improved self-image and reduced cravings.

According to Dr. Ussher, "These results are very encouraging and we are now conducting a randomised controlled trial with 850 women. Regular exercise is ideal for any pregnant women who smoke as it's obviously safe and the benefits are enormous".

Source: BioMed Central

Citation: Exercise effective in helping pregnant women kick the habit (2008, September 23) retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-09-effective-pregnant-women-habit.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.