

Differences among exercisers and nonexercisers during pregnancy

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No one doubts that mothers - especially pregnant mothers - are among the busiest people on earth. And while the benefits of exercise for these women and their developing fetuses are widely known, many expectant mothers do not exercise. A survey examining daily activities of moms-to-be will soon be released as part of a larger study looking at the effect of maternal exercise on fetal development. The results suggest, among other things, that exercising during pregnancy does not require "stealing" time from other activities.

The study was conducted by Linda E. May, Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences (KCUMB), Kansas City, MO; Alan Glaros, KCUMB, and Kathleen M. Gustafson, University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, KS and is entitled Differences Among Exercisers and Non-Exercisers During Pregnancy. The team will discuss its study at the 122nd Annual Meeting of the American Physiological Society (APS; www.the-aps.org/press).

The Study and Background

Based on previous research findings, over one-third (36 percent) of pregnant moms cite time as the main reason for not participating in regular aerobic [exercise](#). With this in mind, the researchers wanted to determine if women who exercised during pregnancy spent less time doing specific activities in order to have time for exercise and to determine if there were any trends between mothers who exercised

during pregnancy and those that do not.

A highly reliable and validated Modifiable Activity Questionnaire (MAQ) was used to survey [pregnant mothers](#). Survey questions pertained to daily activities (i.e., employment, exercise, amount of sleep) and demographics.

Researchers analyzed the results from thirty-eight pregnant mothers (21 exercisers and 17 non-exercisers). All women were healthy, non-smokers between 23 and 39 years of age. The sample population includes women with various education levels, employed in and out of the home, and who live in the Kansas City metro area. Exercisers participated in moderate or vigorous aerobic activity at least 30 minutes three times per week throughout the pregnancy. Control mothers did not.

Results

There were no differences between groups based on maternal age, education levels, employment, number of children, fetal gender, and even maternal height. Although these groups were similar in many ways, there were significant differences between groups and trends as well:

- Although the most common reason for not exercising during pregnancy is 'lack of time,' 85% of control women spent more than 1 hour at the TV or computer and 77% spent more than 1 hour read/writing/studying.
- There was a trend for the exercisers to have slightly more sleep and reading time.
- There was a trend for non-exercisers to have slightly more TV/computer time.

- BMI and maternal pre-pregnancy weight was significantly lower in the exercisers. Additionally, women with more education had lower BMIs, in general for both groups.
- For non-exercising pregnant women, employment was a factor in maternal weight and BMI, such that those who were worked outside of the home had lower BMIs.

Conclusion

The researchers theorize that pregnant mothers who exercise may manage their time more effectively than non-exercisers. Because exercisers sleep and read slightly more than non-exercisers and spend slightly less time on the computer, researchers conclude that exercisers are simply more likely to fit exercise into their day. Non-exercisers may suffer from a perception that they lack time to exercise, when they need to manage their time differently to fit more [physical activity](#) into their day.

According to Dr. May, "if a pregnant mother does some type of physical activity while watching TV or talking on the phone, or parks her car at the farthest point from the store each time, she will increase her daily physical activity and ultimately improve her health and the health of her baby." Such a small step can provide benefits to mom and the fetus, and take no extra time from the daily routine."

Source: American Physiological Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

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