

Playing sport up to the end of pregnancy is healthy for the baby and the mother

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Staying physically active up to the end of pregnancy is healthy for the baby and the mother. Credit: Jonatan R. Ruiz/ SINC

Contrary to more conservative customs, exercising up to the end of pregnancy has no harmful effect on the weight or size of the foetus. This is what has been indicated in a study carried out by researchers of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Polytechnic University of Madrid), which also shows the positive relationship between the weight of sedentary mothers before pregnancy and the body size of their babies. The conclusions appear in the *International Journal of Obesity*.

"Partaking in low-level [physical activity](#) has beneficial effects on

materno-foetal [health](#)". These findings have recently been published in the International Journal of Obesity and highlight the benefits for the health of the baby and the mother when a physically-active lifestyle is maintained throughout [pregnancy](#).

"An [exercise](#) regime carried out during the second and third trimester of pregnancy does not harm the health of the foetus", Jonatan R. Ruiz, researcher at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, and principal author of this study, who has coordinated a team from the Polytechnic University of Madrid in collaboration with the Swedish centre, explains to SINC.

160 healthy women between the ages of 25 and 35 took part in the study, all of whom had sedentary habits and no risk of premature birth. Of this group of women, half followed an exercise regime under the supervision of experts in Physical Activity and Sports Science in collaboration with the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Unit of Hospital Severo Ochoa in Madrid.

The researchers used multiple variables to assess the health of the foetus (body [weight](#), size and gestational age) in women, and they analysed the effect of the training programme carried out during the second and third trimester of pregnancy on the weight and size of the foetus.

"Body size and gestational age, as well as other health parameters, were similar in the group of women who followed the exercise regime compared to those who did no form of physical activity during pregnancy, which indicates that exercise poses no threat to the health of the foetus", Ruiz emphasises.

The authors also measured the pre-pregnancy body weight of the mother, the body size of the [foetus](#), and whether diabetes was developed during gestation. In the group of women who did not partake in any exercise (control group), it was observed that the mother's weight before

becoming pregnant was positively associated with the weight of the newborn.

"Sedentary mothers of higher pre-gestational weight gave birth to heavier newborns. This relationship, however, was not observed in the group of [women](#) who exercised during pregnancy", the researcher concludes. According to experts, babies with excessive weight (more than 4 kg) are more at risk of developing diabetes and certain types of cancer as adults, in addition to complications that may occur at birth.

More information: Rubén Barakat, Alejandro Lucía, y Jonatan R. Ruiz. "Entrenamiento de fuerza muscular durante el embarazo y tamaño corporal del feto: un estudio aleatorio controlado". *International Journal of Obesity*, 33(9):1048-57, Sept 2009.

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