

# Study evaluates tools to encourage a healthy pregnancy

August 8 2011

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The University of Rochester Medical Center and Cornell University have teamed up to launch a major study that will assess electronic and web-based strategies designed to promote healthy behavior in women both during and immediately following their pregnancy. The innovative study is the first of its kind and part of a broader federal initiative to evaluate how technologies such as cell phones can be employed to improve health.

Maintaining a health lifestyle during [pregnancy](#) – including good nutrition, physical activity, avoiding tobacco, alcohol and drugs, and appropriate weight gain – are known to decrease risk for gestational

diabetes, pregnancy-related hypertension, high and low birth weight, and the need for a cesarean delivery. Just as important, after delivery mothers and their children are more likely to be healthy.

“The behavioral decisions made during pregnancy – and immediately after the baby is born – have important implications for the future health of both mother and child,” said Diana Fernandez, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D. “Because of this, it is important that we devise new ways to encourage healthy behavior during this period in women’s lives.”

Fernandez with the URMCM Department of Community and Preventive Medicine along with Christine Olson, Ph.D. with Cornell University’s Division of Nutritional Sciences are leading the study.

The eMoms Rochester project will employ electronic, web, and cell phone-based interventions that are customized to each participant with their own goals and tools to monitor nutrition, physical activity, and other behaviors related to a healthy pregnancy. A preliminary survey conducted earlier this year of 110 pregnant women in Rochester showed that the electronic communications employed by the study are widely used: 87 percent said they used social networking, 96 percent own a cell phone, and 94 percent send text messages.

“This study examines whether cell phone text messages and an interactive web site with many resources, tools, and information specific to Rochester can help pregnant women and new moms to be healthy at this important time of life,” says Olson. “At this time in women’s lives, it can be hard to live a healthy lifestyle. Our goal is to provide the tools and information to make it easier and to do this 24/7 using electronic communication technologies.”

The study – which is the largest of its kind ever undertaken in the U.S. – will follow 3,500 Monroe County women for a two-year period which

includes their pregnancy and 18 months after delivery. Pregnant women will be screened for eligibility before 20 weeks and will be randomized to control and intervention groups. During the two-year period, participants will complete six online surveys including early and late pregnancy and six weeks, six months, one year, and eighteen months after delivery. The study will also review each participant's medical records for information about their pregnancy, delivery, and early postpartum.

**More information:** [www.emomsroc.org/](http://www.emomsroc.org/)

Provided by University of Rochester Medical Center

Citation: Study evaluates tools to encourage a healthy pregnancy (2011, August 8) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-08-tools-healthy-pregnancy.html>

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