

Working while pregnant won't harm the baby, study finds

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Employment didn't raise risk of preterm, low birth-weight baby, researchers report.

(HealthDay)—Working during pregnancy does not increase a woman's risk of having a preterm or low birth-weight baby, a new study found.

Researchers examined data from nearly 1,600 women who gave birth in 2005. Some of the women worked full-time or part-time while pregnant, while others did not work during their pregnancy.

There were no differences in the rates of [premature birth](#) or [low birth-weight](#) babies between the women who worked or stayed at home while pregnant, the University of Minnesota investigators found.

However, known [risk factors](#) (such as being black) remained strongly

associated with preterm birth and low birth weight, according to the study published online recently in the journal *Women's Health Issues*.

"Prior research shows an association between certain job characteristics, such as strenuous physical labor and long work hours, and adverse [birth outcomes](#), but often fails to disentangle a woman's employment choices from her birth outcomes, given that women who work during pregnancy—out of choice or out of need—are very different from those who do not," study leader Katy Backes Kozhimannil, of the division of health policy and management, said in a university news release.

The researchers said their findings show that the focus should not be on whether or not a woman works while she is pregnant, but rather on job characteristics, especially those that are known to increase the risk of preterm birth and low birth weight.

"Our findings reiterate the importance of ongoing policy dialogue about the challenges faced by [working mothers](#)," Kozhimannil said.

Kozhimannil noted that the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, currently under consideration in Congress, has prompted debate on how best to promote healthy pregnancies among working women.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [working during pregnancy](#).

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