

Fish oil found to help serious pregnancy complications

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Taking fish oil during pregnancy could limit the effects of serious complications such as gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia and miscarriage as well as enhancing fetal growth, according to researchers at The University of Western Australia.

The researchers added fish oil to the diets of pregnant rats and examined its effect on the placenta and fetus. They showed that after fish oil supplementation the placenta had higher levels of [novel compounds](#) called resolvins. Other researchers have shown that resolvins are formed from omega-3 fatty acids and can reduce inflammatory conditions.

Researchers from three schools at UWA - Anatomy, Physiology and

Human Biology; Medicine and Pharmacology; and Women's and Infants' health - collaborated to conduct the study, which is published in the August edition of the *Journal of Lipid Research*.

Inflammation of the placenta occurs in pregnancy disorders, including [gestational diabetes](#), pre-eclampsia and miscarriage. The UWA research shows the omega-3 fatty acids present in fish oil can help limit inflammation in the placenta.

Lead researcher and PhD student Megan Jones said while it was well known that fish oil could be beneficial for [fetal brain](#) development, this latest research suggested it may also improve the function of the placenta.

"Many people will have heard that fish oil is good for you but we don't fully understand the mechanisms," she said. "The omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil are known to limit inflammation, and only recently it has come to light that they do this by being converted to resolvins that reduce inflammation after it's occurred.

"These findings significantly help further our understanding of how fish oil intake may be beneficial during pregnancy."

Ms Jones pointed out that human trials were needed to confirm the findings and further explore the effects.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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