

Are pregnant women getting enough key nutrients?

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Master's student Michele Eickstaedt

A research study at Massey University aims to uncover more about the dietary habits of pregnant women in New Zealand.

Good nutrition during pregnancy is essential for both mother and baby, but little is known about what New Zealand women are eating at this vital time.

It's a topic that Master of Human Nutrition student Michele Eickstaedt is passionate about. "I've always wanted to study the health of pregnant women, and I have a passion for the important roles of omega-3s for optimal health as well, so this study enables me to combine both interests and will hopefully provide some useful information for pregnant women.

"We have such scant knowledge about what pregnant women are eating in New Zealand, and whether they are getting enough key nutrients, such as omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids in their diets."

Omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids are found in the membranes of every cell of the human body. Their nutritional sources are a range of foods, including meat, poultry, fish, vegetable oils, and some vegetables.

Other studies have reported that modern diets in countries similar to New Zealand do not supply pregnant women with adequate amounts of omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

Dr Cath Conlon, a lecturer in [human nutrition](#) and one of the study's supervisors, says the limited information locally about what pregnant women are eating means it is unknown if the daily dietary recommendations are being met.

"The health outcomes are the key. These [fatty acids](#) are essential building blocks for almost every cell in the body. They're really important for the baby's brain development and growth, and they're really important for the mother's health as well. It's a double whammy – good for baby, good for mum," she says.

The study is looking for at least 450 women of any ethnic origin from across New Zealand to fill in an anonymous online survey. Participants need to be aged 16 years and over, live in New Zealand, and be in their

last trimester of pregnancy.

"If people don't have the facilities to participate online, we can send out hard copies of the survey to them," says Ms Eickstaedt. The questionnaire takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

On completion of the survey, study participants will receive a link to the Ministry of Health's guide Eating for Healthy Pregnant Women, and also go into the draw to win one of two subscriptions to OHBaby! magazine for a year.

Ms Eickstaedt says if participants want to receive a summary of the research findings, they can indicate that when they complete the survey. "This is such important information, and we are grateful to the women who give up their time to take part. Hopefully it will help other [pregnant women](#) in the future."

The survey is available online until 20 December 2014.

To complete it, click [here](#).

For further information, visit the website: www.massey.ac.nz/pufa

Provided by Massey University

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