

Exercise cuts gestational diabetes in obese pregnant women

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Exercise alone can reduce the number of obese, pregnant women who develop gestational diabetes, a new study from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) has shown.

Women in the exercise group also had [lower blood pressure](#) than the control group towards the end of their pregnancy.

The study has just been published in *PLOS Medicine*.

The number of [women](#) of childbearing age who are obese is on the rise. Obese women are at increased risk of complications during pregnancy, the most common of which are [gestational diabetes](#), [high blood pressure](#), a large increase in weight and pre-eclampsia.

They are also at an increased risk of needing a Caesarean section and giving birth to large babies. These complications can have a great impact on the health of both mother and child, not just during pregnancy, but also later in life.

Diabetes rates dropped

In a large study at NTNU and St. Olavs Hospital in Trondheim, Norway, researchers studied the effect of regular exercise during pregnancy in obese, [pregnant women](#).

The study comprised 91 women who were divided randomly into an exercise group or a control group. Of those, only two in the exercise group vs. nine in the control group developed gestational diabetes. The women in the exercise group also had lower blood pressure towards the end of their pregnancy.

Long-term consequences

"It's important to reduce obesity-related pregnancy complications because they can have long-term consequences for both the mother and her child," says Dr. Trine Moholdt, the principal investigator for the study. "We advise all women to exercise during pregnancy, as long as there aren't any medical reasons that prevent them from exercising."

The study also showed that the amount of exercise needed to reduce the risk of gestational diabetes is not very high, Moholdt said.

Walking and strength training three times a week

Women in the exercise group were invited to three weekly supervised sessions of 60 minutes throughout the course of their pregnancy. The training consisted of 35 minutes of moderate intensity treadmill walking and 25 minutes of strength training. The [control group](#) was given standard prenatal care.

The researchers noted that the intensity of the training for the exercise group was not very high and that not all women in the [exercise group](#) met for all sessions.

"That meant that even a little training during [pregnancy](#) can be beneficial," said Kirsti Krohn Garnæs, the PhD candidate who was responsible for all the training sessions in the trial.

More information: Exercise training and weight gain in obese pregnant women: a randomized controlled trial (ETIP). Kirsti Krohn Garnæs, Siv Mørkved, Øyvind Salvesen, Trine Moholdt. *PLOS Medicine* 26 July 2016.

Provided by Norwegian University of Science and Technology

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