

Letting go of worries during pregnancy associated with healthier birth weight

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Pregnancy test. Credit: public domain

Attending to the present moment in an accepting way (mindfulness) during pregnancy may be beneficial for both mother and her baby, as mother's subsequent mood is better and baby's birth weight is healthier. That is the main conclusion of new research by Tilburg University.

Anxiety and depression during pregnancy have been previously linked to a larger probability of low [birth weight](#) of the child, although the mechanism is largely unknown. Mindfulness, attention to the [present moment](#) in an accepting way, has been shown to be able to reduce worrying and feelings of anxiety and depression. Ivan Nyklicek, PhD

and colleagues of Tilburg University linked the two and investigated the question if mindfulness during pregnancy would also be associated with a healthier birth weight of the baby.

In this study, 905 [pregnant women](#) participated, who completed questionnaires on facets of mindfulness and mood at 22 and 32 weeks during pregnancy and at 1 week after delivery. Medical records provided information on birth data of the baby.

Higher mindfulness at 22 weeks turned out to be associated with lower depressive and higher positive mood later in pregnancy. Even more importantly, while mood was not associated with birth outcomes, higher scores on the mindful facet of letting go of worries at 22 weeks was linked to a higher birth weight and a 12% smaller chance of delivering an underweight child.

These results suggest that it seems worthwhile to examine the potentially favorable effects of a [mindfulness](#) training for pregnant women.

Provided by Tilburg University

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