

# Depression and weight gain in pregnancy linked to sitting down

4 November 2015

A link between depression in pregnancy and long periods of sitting down has been identified by researchers from the University of Warwick.

The study found those suffering from symptoms of [depression](#) during pregnancy are more likely to sit down for long periods of time in the second trimester. The academics also found this puts them at risk of greater weight gain and contracting gestational diabetes.

The study was led by Dr Nithya Sukumar, Clinical Research Fellow, Metabolic & Vascular Health, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick has been presented today (Wednesday 4 November) at the Society for Endocrinology annual conference in Edinburgh.

Dr Sukumar said: "Pregnant women could benefit from early intervention to improve their physical and mental health and reduce the risks associated with sedentary behaviour.

"Gestational diabetes can increase the risk of birth complications for the mother and baby and so it is important we minimise this risk by reducing the time that [pregnant women](#) spend sitting down".

The research highlights the need to address women's physical and mental wellbeing from the early stages of pregnancy to help reduce the health risks associated with sedentary behaviour.

Sedentary behaviour has previously been linked to diabetes, obesity, heart disease and mental health problems, but its impact on the health of pregnant women is unclear. There are no UK guidelines for the intensity and duration of physical activity needed to keep pregnant women healthy.

The study entitled Longer duration of sitting down in pregnancy is associated with gestational diabetes, greater weight gain and depressive symptoms involved 1,263 pregnant women. They

were asked to report on their level of physical activity and emotional wellbeing in the first trimester of pregnancy and then again in the late stages of the second.

The research team from the University of Warwick and George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust, Nuneaton, found that overall, women with self-reported depression symptoms were more likely to sit down for longer periods - despite accounting for their BMI, age and socio-economic status. Pregnant women who spent more time sitting down in the second trimester also did fewer amounts of moderate or vigorous physical activity, and sedentary women gained significant amounts of weight between the first and second trimester.

Finally, the researchers also found that sedentary pregnant women had higher blood glucose levels around 28 weeks of gestation, putting them at higher risk of developing gestational diabetes.

Fellow researcher, Dr Ponnusamy Saravanan, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick said: "Encouraging women to take breaks from sitting down might be an easier public health policy to implement than increasing their physical activity during [pregnancy](#). We believe reducing the sitting time has the potential to reduce pregnant women's risk of [gestational diabetes](#) and reduce the metabolic risk factors of their newborns".

Provided by University of Warwick

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