

High Birthweight Risks Minimized When Pregnant Women Exercise

July 16, 2013

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Participating in moderately intense [exercise](#) three times a week during the second and third trimester of pregnancy drastically reduces the risk of delivering a high birth-weight newborn, according to new research recently published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* ([BJSM](#)).

In their paper, study leaders [Ruben Barakat](#) of the Polytechnic University of Madrid, [Alejandro Lucia](#) of the European University of Madrid, and Jonatan Ruiz of the University of Granada report that the physical activity halves the risk of babies being born with macrosomia (weighing over 8.8 pounds).

Furthermore, after having hundreds of sedentary pregnant women participate in a series of programmed training sessions, the authors also reported a reduced risk of needing a [caesarean](#) delivery.

A total of 780 Spanish pregnant women who attended two Madrid-based primary health care facilities were

asked to participate in the study. Of those, 510 agreed to take part, all of whom were admittedly sedentary (exercised for less than 20 minutes on less than three days each week), the researchers explained in a statement.

The training program used by the study participants consisted of 55-minute-long sessions of aerobic, strength-training, and flexibility exercises three times per week from weeks 10-12 of the pregnancy through weeks 38-39 of the pregnancy. The control group received standard care and recommendations, they explained.

While the training sessions did not appear to reduce the risk of gestational [diabetes mellitus](#), it did lead to a 58-percent decrease in macrosomia and a 34-percent decrease in the need for caesarean delivery.

According to Ruiz, who was a corresponding author on the study and is a researcher in the University of Granada Department of Physical and Sports Education, the study results “reinforce the need to encourage more supervised exercise interventions during pregnancy to combat the negative effects of gestational diabetes mellitus.”

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) guidelines suggest that healthy women should participate in at least 2.5 hours worth of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week both during and after their pregnancy.

Women who already participate in more vigorous exercise, such as running or jogging, may continue to do so during and after their pregnancy “provided they stay healthy and discuss with their health care provider how and when activity should be adjusted over time,” the CDC added. Regardless of the exercise's intensity, they recommend that it be spread out evenly throughout the course of the entire week.

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