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Research Article

EFFECT OF EXERCISES ON PREGNANCY

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Pregnancy is considered to be an ideal time for positive lifestyle modifications, like increasing physical activity in day to day life. Women while pregnant, should be encouraged to engage in various types of exercises as exercise have an essential role in their health maintenance and prevention and treatment of diseases. This article aims to study the benefits of exercises.
Material and Methods: Various articles from Google scholar have been reviewed to study the effects of exercises during pregnancy.
Results and Conclusion: Regular exercises during pregnancy improves or maintains overall physical fitness and benefits most women with minimal risks.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is an ideal time for positive lifestyle modifications, which includes increase in physical activity to improve their unhealthy behavior in day to day life.

Maternal Exercises have many benefits and has been associated with pregnancy outcomes, without maternal and fetal risks. Women should be encouraged to engage in exercises as they have an essential role in maintenance of health, prevention and treatment of diseases in all stages of life including pregnancy. Exercises should be modified during pregnancy to accommodate the normal anatomical and physiological changes that occurs in pregnant women to avoid the adverse effects of fetus.

Benefits of exercises in pregnancy

Exercises have long term psychological as well as physiological benefits on pregnancy:

- Low intensity exercise program (Yoga and Pilates) improves cardio pulmonary functions, enhance muscle strength and achieve 50% to 60% maximal heartbeat.
- Exercises increase speed of placental growth and improve placental function.
- Exercises reduce the rate of caesarian section which further reduces complication and cost.
- Exercises help in avoiding excessive weight gain during pregnancy.
- Exercises may reduce pregnancy related low back pain and pelvic pain both, which is a common problem during pregnancy.
- Regular exercises throughout the pregnancy results in shorter duration of first stage of labor as prolonged labor is an outcome or adverse effect of not performing physical activity during pregnancy.
- Exercises also have an effect on fetal heart rate which helps in decreasing fetal complications.
- Exercises help in maintaining balance, coordination, power, endurance and flexibility.
- Exercises help in prevention urinary incontinence (specially Kegel exercises done during pregnancy).
- Exercises may also help in reducing the risk of developing gestational diabetes and preeclampsia.

Prescribing exercises in pregnancy

Pregnant women, who want to initiate an exercise program, should be evaluated for medical and obstetric factors, which can increase their risk factor for maternal or fetal complications. The exercise prescription includes:

1. Type of exercises
2. Intensity and progression overtime
3. Frequency and duration

Women should choose exercise that activate large muscle groups in rhythmic and continuous fashion (Walking, Swimming, Jogging) and maintain strength and flexibility.

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Consideration of principles while choosing an exercise program

- Exercises that require jumping movement and quick change in direction should be avoided.
- Exercises that require supine position should be avoided after first trimester as they may lead to hypotensive episodes.
- Prolonged and intense exercise should be avoided as they can lead to dehydration and hypothermia.

Summary

Women with uncomplicated pregnancies should be encouraged to exercise as a part of healthy lifestyle before, during and after pregnancy. Exercising during pregnancy has demonstrated benefits for most pregnant women including maintenance or improvement of physical fitness, control of weight gain, reduction in low back pain and reducing the risk of developing gestational diabetes or preeclampsia. Bedrestal though frequently prescribed in past is rarely indicated, in most cases physical activity should be considered.

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