

Exercise during pregnancy may boost baby's brain development

Relaxnews Published Tuesday, November 12, 2013 6:48PM EST



Exercising during pregnancy may give your newborn baby's brain a boost, Canadian researchers have found. (VojtechVik/shutterstock.com)

A new Canadian study suggests that moderate exercise during pregnancy can boost your baby's brain development.

Researchers from the University of Montreal recruited 18 mothers-to-be at the start of their second trimester, finding that as little as 20 minutes of moderate exercise three times per week during the rest of their pregnancy can boost a newborn child's brain development. Subjects typically walked, jogged, swam, or cycled.

Using an EEG, the researchers measured the newborns' brain activity while they slept when eight to 12 days old. "We used 124 soft electrodes placed on the infant's head and waited for the child to fall asleep on his or her mother's lap," explained researcher Elise Labonte-LeMoyne, a Ph.D. candidate in kinesiology. "We then measured auditory memory by means of the brain's unconscious response to repeated and novel sounds."

"Our results show that the babies born from the mothers who were physically active have a more mature cerebral activation, suggesting that their brains developed more rapidly."

Other studies have found health benefits for the babies of women who exercised during pregnancy. While animal studies have also shown that exercise during pregnancy alters the fetal brain, the researchers say that this is the first study to look at exercise's effect on human brain development.

The team presented their findings Sunday at the Society for Neuroscience annual meeting in San Diego.

"Most of all, we are optimistic that this will encourage women to change their health habits, given that the simple act of exercising during pregnancy could make a difference for their child's future," said head researcher Professor Dave Ellemborg.

"While being sedentary increases the risks of suffering complications during pregnancy, being active can ease post-partum recovery, make pregnancy more comfortable and reduce the risk of obesity in the children," added Professor Daniel Curnier, who was also involved in the study.

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/exercise-during-pregnancy-may-boost-baby-s-brain-development-1.1540258>