

Media Release

Cycling away from Gestational Diabetes

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For some pregnant women, exercise can be a struggle. But with the help of UWA physiologists and researchers, pregnant Perth women are getting fitter in study aimed at preventing gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM).

The UWA Cycle Study began over two years ago as a clinical trial to investigate the effects of a 14-week, supervised, home-based exercise program on the incidence of gestational diabetes in pregnant woman. The study recruits pregnant volunteers with a history of GDM and provides participants with a stationary bike between weeks 14 and 28 of their pregnancy. An exercise physiologist visits the participants three times a week, and aims to build their fitness levels throughout the program. Best of all, the program is free of charge.

Many women across WA who have participated in the program have subsequently avoided a diagnosis of GDM in their pregnancy. Morella Rey, of Canning Vale, participated in the study in 2012 and avoided a gestational diabetes diagnosis following completion of the program. "I believe the Cycle Study had a very positive impact on my pregnancy", Morella said. "I felt more energetic from the beginning of the exercise program and much fitter by the end".

GDM is a complication that affects 10 per cent of all pregnancies and has serious health consequences for both mother and child. Women with a history of gestational diabetes are five times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes in the future and put their children at risk of diabetes and metabolic diseases later in life.

The Cycle Study's exercise program has also been designed to help busy, and previously sedentary, mums achieve a regular exercise regimen. Pregnant women with children can find it hard to find time to exercise, compounded by other factors like morning sickness and fatigue. Morella said "As a result of the program, I'm keen to keep physically active after the birth of my baby".

Women who were previously affected by GDM and who are currently planning to get pregnant, or are less than 14 weeks pregnant, can volunteer for The Cycle Study until mid-2014. Volunteers are randomly selected for either the exercise program or the control group (the control group does not receive treatment but is used as a benchmark to measure the participant's results). For more information, visit www.facebook.com/thecyclestudy or call the research midwives on (08) 9340 1705.

"I recommend 100 per cent to join the study. It is beneficial for you, your baby and it has a very positive effect on your family as well" says Morella.

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