



Physical Activity: Utilizing guidelines to promote health among pregnant women

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Introduction

- Physical inactivity is a global public health problem (WHO, 2018)
- Physical activity is key to improving the health of the Nation.
- Physical activity is recommended for most pregnant women to help achieve physical health and wellness (ACOG, 2015).
- Physical Activity Guidelines is an essential resource for healthcare providers to help Americans maintain or improve health through regular physical activity.
- Healthcare providers must develop strategies to recommend and encourage pregnant women to participate in health promoting physical activities based on developed evidence based guidelines.
- It is important for pregnant women to recognize the positive impact of being physically active both throughout and after pregnancy

Physical Activity Guidelines

- In 2008, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued physical activity guidelines for Americans
- The Guidelines focus on reducing the risk of chronic disease and promoting health-related fitness.
- Benefits of physical activity outweigh harm of inactivity at all ages (WHO, 2018).
- For healthy pregnant and postpartum women, the guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.
- Pregnant women who regularly participate in vigorous-intensity physical activity may continue physical activity during pregnancy and the postpartum period (USDHHS, 2008).
- A gradual progression of exercise should be implemented in women who were sedentary prior to pregnancy (ACOG, 2015).



Discussion

- Physical activity in pregnancy has minimal risks and has been shown to benefit most women.
- Healthcare providers are in a wonderful position to include teaching preventative and health promotion services to pregnant women.
- Women with uncomplicated pregnancies should be encouraged to engage in physical activities before, during, and after pregnancy.
- Women who are physically active at the beginning of pregnancy should be encouraged to continue.
- Women who are not physically active should be encouraged to view pregnancy as an opportunity to focus on healthier habits.
- Regular physical activity during pregnancy improves or maintains physical fitness, helps with weight management, reduces the risk of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, cesarean deliveries, and enhances psychological well-being (ACOG, 2015).

Implications for Practice

- Healthcare providers must assess pregnant women's level of physical activity and educate them about the benefits of physical activity during pregnancy.
- Healthcare providers must be aware of strategies to promote physical activity.
- Healthcare providers must educate women about physical activities that are safe to initiate or continue during pregnancy.
- Healthcare providers must educate women about absolute and relative contraindications to aerobic physical activity during pregnancy.
- Through education, healthcare providers can improve the attitudes and beliefs of women regarding physical activity in pregnancy

Physical activity education

- Assess previous and current physical activity level, including type, frequency, duration, and intensity of physical activity.
- Safe exercises in pregnancy include walking, swimming, indoor cycling, modified yoga and Pilates (ACOG, 2017).
- Weight lifting using lower weight and higher reps is safe during pregnancy, however isometric movements should be limited.
- Safety during exercise ~ do not lay flat on their backs for a prolonged period, proper hydration, and temperature regulation.
- Absolute contraindications of PA in pregnancy include; certain heart and lung diseases, cervical insufficiency or cerclage, multifetal pregnancy with risk of preterm labor, placenta previa after 26 weeks, premature labor, pre-eclampsia and premature rupture of membranes (ACOG, 2017).
- Relative contraindications of PA in pregnancy include; anemia, maternal cardiac arrhythmia, poorly controlled conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, hyperthyroidism and seizure disorders, obesity or extreme underweight, orthopedic limitations and intrauterine growth restrictions (ACOG, 2017).
- Exercise should be stopped and the healthcare provider should be notified if bleeding from the vagina, dizziness, chest pain, headache, muscle weakness, calf pain and swelling, painful contractions of the uterus, or fluid leading from the vagina should occur (ACOG, 2017).

Conclusion

- Physical activity and health promotion have emerged as major goals of national health policy.
- Physical activity during pregnancy should be encouraged to promote health and wellness in both the pregnant and postpartum periods.
- Healthcare providers are in a vital position to educate and motivate pregnant women regarding physical activity and recommend physical activity during pregnancy.
- Physical activity education should include assessment of current physical activity level, review of absolute contraindications to physical activity in pregnancy, review of relative contraindications to physical activity in pregnancy, examples of safe exercises in pregnancy, and when to contact the healthcare provider.
- Discussion of the physical activity guidelines is important in improving the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of women while promoting health among pregnant woman (CDC, 2006).

References

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