Research Report

Mindful Eating and Maternal Health

Greaux Healthy
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Pregnancy | Maternal Obesity | Mindful Eating | Dietary Inflammatory Index | Adiposity | Insulin Resistance | Gestational Weight Gain

Read the published, peer-reviewed paper here: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34994169/

Citation

Lindsay KL, Most J, Buehler K, Kebbe M, Altazan AD, Redman LM. Maternal mindful eating as a target for improving metabolic outcomes in pregnant women with obesity. Front Biosci 2021;26:1548-1558.

General Summary

The prevalence of maternal obesity in pregnancy is increasing, both in the United States and worldwide. Prenatal development may set the stage for programming the risk of obesity in children. Emerging research suggests that mindfulness while eating, or paying attention in the moment and reducing distractions, can influence metabolic health in non-pregnant populations. To explore mindfulness in pregnant women, we collected data on 46 pregnant women with obesity. Our findings offer early support that mindful eating practices may improve the metabolic health outcomes for pregnant women with obesity.

How will the results help pregnant women and those who care for them?

It may be beneficial for those who care for pregnant women to inform their patients on mindfulness practices as they relate to eating behaviors.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study investigates how mindful eating and diet quality impacts weight gain, fat gain, and metabolic outcomes for pregnant women with obesity.

Who was involved?

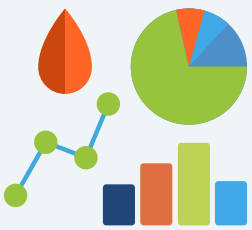
The participants in this study were pregnant women with obesity who were between the ages of 18 to 40. Obesity was defined as having a body mass index greater than or equal to 30 kg/m2. Participants had to be less than 15 weeks pregnant at the time of the initial screening visit. Also, participants had to have a confirmed singleton, viable pregnancy in order to participate. Information from a total of 46 pregnant women with obesity was used for this study.

18-40 years old
BMI ≤ 30 kg/m2
< 15 weeks pregnant

How did we get the results and findings?

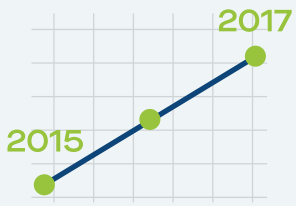
The results and findings of this study were based upon information collected from 46 pregnant women with obesity. We measured gestational weight gain, fat mass gain, height, weight, and body composition. We analyzed fasting blood samples to look at metabolic outcomes. We looked at the answers to questionnaires regarding mindfulness and photographs of participants' food.

46 Pregnant women



When did the study take place?

Research participants for this study were recruited through community and social media advertisements, as well as referrals by local obstetricians, from January 2015 to January 2017.



What was unique about this study? How were patients given a voice in research?

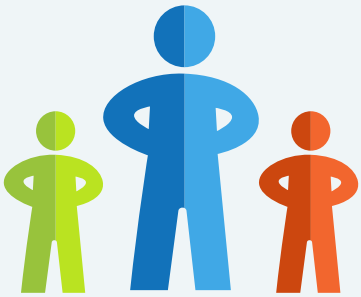
Rather than looking at the composition of maternal diets, this study looked at eating behaviors, such as mindful attention, awareness, and reducing distractions during meals.

What were participants asked to do during the study?

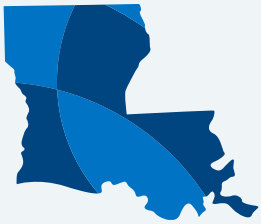
Pregnant women with obesity were asked to complete questionnaires, provide a fasting blood sample, take photographs of their food, and be measured for their weight and body composition by research staff.

Were there any limitations to the study?

The present study was based on a small number of participants. This small number limits our ability to test whether the findings may differ by racial or ethnic group. Also, as an observational study, our results do not identify the causes for the observed relationships we found.



What did we learn?



Participants in our study reflect the maternal population in the state of Louisiana, such that the majority were either non-Hispanic Black (47%) or non-Hispanic White (45%). Distracted eating emerged as a factor related to weight and fat mass, such that greater distracted eating behavior was associated with greater gains in weight and fat mass. Example items used to ask about distracted eating included (a) “I think about things I need to do while I am eating” and (b) “I eat so quickly that I don’t notice what I am eating.” This exploratory analysis adds to the sparse literature on the relationship between mindful eating and metabolic health outcomes in pregnant women with obesity. Our findings offer early evidence suggesting that mindful eating may work as a tool to improve metabolic health outcomes for pregnant women with obesity, although further research is needed.

Why is this research important to patients, clinicians, and other researchers?

Our exploratory analysis offers support for using mindful eating practices as a tool to improve health outcomes in pregnant women with obesity. Pregnant women may be more receptive of a prenatal lifestyle intervention, such as mindfulness practices, once they are informed that such health behavior change can benefit their offspring.

What’s next?

This study provides early evidence that mindful eating has the potential to serve as a tool to improve the metabolic health outcomes in pregnant women with obesity. Further research on this topic is needed.