

Yoga improves pregnancy outcomes

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Assessing the safety and efficacy of yoga as an intervention to improve pregnancy outcomes.

Practicing yoga during pregnancy appears to be a "safe" way to significantly improve pregnancy outcome, say Indian researchers.

For the study, 335 women at 18 to 20 weeks' gestation were assigned to participate in a daily yoga (n = 169) or control (n = 166) intervention up until delivery. Women in the two groups were matched for age, parity, body weight, and Doppler velocimetry scores of umbilical and uterine arteries.

The yoga group performed physical postures, deep breathing exercises, relaxation, and meditation for an hour each day, while the control group was told to take two 30-minute walks. Frequent telephone calls and strict completion of an activity diary ensured that the women complied with their allocated intervention.

Dr. Shamanthakamani (Vivekananda Yoga Research Foundation, Bangalore) and co-workers found that adherence to the yoga program reduced the likelihood of preterm labor and of having a low-birth-weight baby, in comparison to the walking intervention. Rates of intrauterine growth restriction and pregnancy-induced hypertension were also reduced by yoga, with no significant adverse events reported.

"Given the larger picture of multiple failed attempts to reduce low birth weight and prematurity globally in the last decade, we provide preliminary data for the first time to support a simple, potential intervention, particularly in India, to improve pregnancy outcomes," concludes the team.

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