

Barriers to Physical Activity Among Pregnant Women During Pregnancy

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31344/ijhhs.v5i0.314>

Introduction: Co-morbidities such as obesity, gestational diabetes and pregnancy induced hypertension during pregnancy can be dangerous to the mother and foetus. Regular physical activity during pregnancy not only maintains maternal and foetal wellbeing, but it also maintains physical fitness and brings various health benefits. However, many women reduce their physical activity levels during pregnancy.

Objectives: Thus, this study aimed to identify the barriers that could prevent pregnant mothers from doing physical activities.

Methods: This is a cross-sectional study involving 168 pregnant women aged 18 to 35 years between gestational age 12 to 35 weeks in a primary health clinic in Kuantan, Pahang. Their socio-demographic characteristics were recorded, and barriers for physical activity assessed through a set of pre-tested questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sociodemographic characteristics and the barriers.

Results: The mean (SD) age was 28.0 (3.6) and majority of them were of Malay ethnicity from B40 group. Two thirds (74.4%) had tertiary education and 66.7% were working mothers. More than half (53.0%) of the participants were overweight and obese. Moreover, 58% of the participants had leg cramp and 63.1% felt fatigue. Almost 80.4% had backache and 46.4% had epigastric discomfort.

Conclusion: Barriers such as leg cramp, backache, fatigue and epigastric discomfort could prevent pregnant women from conducting physical activities. Opportunistic recommendation by physician and concerns on the physical activity should be addressed.

Keywords: pregnant mothers, physical activities, barriers, pregnancy