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Exercise as an Intervention for Prevention of Gestational Diabetes

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Abstract

Background: Early detection of at risk women with appropriate care management can reduce the risk for perinatal complications associated with GDM. Establishing an exercise prescription for pregnant women at risk for GDM may improve care management and health status of these women. Current research indicates exercise offers many benefits for pregnant women including the potential to reduce prevalence of GDM.

Objective: The purpose of an integrative literature review was to identify risk factors for gestational diabetes and evaluate the effect exercise has on glycemic control in women at risk for GDM.

Method: an integrative literature review was conducted following an extensive search to identify women at risk for GDM and the implementation of an exercise protocol during pregnancy. A total of two databases were used in September 2017 to gather relevant sources: CINAHL and PubMed.

Results: Obesity, older maternal age, certain ethnicities, family history of diabetes, and glycosuria were identified as risk factors for GDM. Research produced mixed results regarding the effects of exercise on glycemic control. Exercise protocols with greater frequency and intensity had improved glycemic results for women at risk of GDM.

Conclusion: The review established key risk factors for identifying at risk women. However, there is a need to develop a standardized exercise prescription to reduce the complexity of exercise and improve adherence.

Keywords: gestational diabetes, exercise, gestational diabetes risk factors