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Hypertension and pregnancy

Certain diets may reduce the risk of developing hypertension during pregnancy

NEW European research has found that eating a diet rich in vegetables and fish during pregnancy could help lower the risk of developing high blood pressure and pre-eclampsia.

Carried out by researchers at Imperial College London and the University of Bristol, the new large-scale study looked at 55,138 women who took part in the Danish National Birth Cohort.

The women were asked to complete several telephone interviews, including two during pregnancy at 12 and 30 weeks and two interviews at six and 18 months after birth. They also completed a questionnaire on their dietary habits at week 25 of their pregnancy.

The findings, published in *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics*, showed that eating a diet rich in vegetables and fish appeared to reduce the risk of developing gestational hypertension by 14 per cent and pre-eclampsia by 21 per cent.

On the other hand, following a Western diet, which is high in potatoes, meat, white bread and margarine, increased the risk of developing gestational hypertension by 18 per cent and pre-eclampsia by 40 per cent.

On average, women with high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia also had a higher body mass index (1.6-2.3 kg/m² higher) than those without the conditions.

DIET AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

While the researchers point out that the study only shows an association



Eating a healthy diet high in vegetables and fish could help control blood pressure during pregnancy, according to new research.

between diet and the risk of high blood pressure during pregnancy, rather than a causal relationship, they add that the results do add to an existing body of evidence that supports following a healthy, well-balanced diet.

Author of the study Emmanuella Ikem also added that: "Our findings support the importance of eating a healthy and well-balanced diet in vegetables and fish and cutting out processed foods where possible. This will help to reduce a woman's risk of developing high blood pressure and pre-eclampsia during pregnancy."

"Current advice recommends eating at least five portions of different fruit and

vegetables every day, instead of foods high in fat. And generally it is safe to consume fish during pregnancy - no more than two portions of oily fish, such as mackerel or salmon, a week, and no more than two fresh tuna steaks or four medium-sized cans of tuna a week. Women should avoid eating shark, swordfish or marlin."

According to previous research, high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, affects around one in 10 pregnancies.

Pre-eclampsia, a condition related to high blood pressure which can cause serious complications for mother and baby, affects two to eight in every 100 women and develops from around 20 weeks of gestation.

AFP Relaxnews