

Stress and preterm delivery research paper example

[Health & Medicine](#), [Stress](#)



Introduction

Over the years, there has been a lot of research to establish a link between stress (maternal stress and fetal stress) with premature births. A normal human pregnancy will take between 37 and 42 weeks. A preterm labor is one that starts when the 37 weeks of pregnancy have not elapsed. Premature deliveries are usually caused by many factors depending on the environment the mother lives. Stress is one of the causes of preterm deliveries and also one of the most common.

Pregnancy is a period when a woman's body experiences so many changes. The woman's emotional functions and the family life also see some changes. These are the changes that are likely to cause additional stress to the life of any busy pregnant lady who already has work and house demands to attend to. A lot of stress can be unmanageable, causing insomnia, fatigue, anxiety, headaches and backaches as well as poor appetite in the short run. In the long run, stress may result in serious health difficulties like low immunity, heart diseases and high blood pressure.

Expectant women who have a lot of stress have high risk of preterm delivery- births before the 37th week of pregnancy. Such babies could be too small and are prone to health problems, disabilities like mental retardation or in extreme cases death. In ideal circumstances, majority of the women cope easily with the physical and emotional changes during the expectancy period. Any woman who handles stress during pregnancy has very low health risks resulting from stress. Those who feel like they cannot cope with the stress should consult a psychologist or a health provider who will guide her through the steps of coping with stress.

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How stress can lead to preterm delivery

Scientists do not have a clear understanding of how stress can result in preterm delivery. However, there are theories of how this happens through stress related hormones. When a woman is stressed, a hormone known as Corticotropin Releasing Hormone (CRH) is produced from the placenta and the brain. This hormone has a close relationship with labor induction. It makes the woman's body to produce prostaglandins chemicals which induce uterine contractions.

If an expectant woman has stress for a long time, it could affect the immune system, making the mother prone to uterine infections. Uterine infections are a major cause of preterm deliveries. This is most common for those births occurring before the 28th pregnancy week. Stress will also influence a woman's behavior. Other women will respond to stress by engaging in alcohol, cigarettes and other illicit drugs. Drugs have a history of resulting in premature deliveries in addition to other pregnancy problems. Drug abuse also poses a high birth defects risk.

Types of stress that is associated with preterm delivery

There are several kinds of stress that may result in premature deliveries.

These are stresses depending on the cause or how they affect the expectant woman.

Routine stress

This is the daily stress that everyone faces like traffic delays and work deadlines which could result in preterm delivery. However, stress is not a

bad thing because if it is well handled, it gives anybody the oomph and drive to work extra harder to achieve their targets.

Long lasting stress

Severe and persistent stress for a very long period of time will pose pregnancy risks. Research has revealed that pregnant women who go through negative or catastrophic events at some point in their lives are at a higher risk of preterm delivery. Such negative events could be rape, divorce, and serious illness, death of a close person or job loss. Research has shown that such women who go through such bad events have a shorter gestation period than those who have not.

Chronic stress

Chronic stress is also another kind of stress that may result in premature births. Research results show that homeless women and those with financial difficulties have a higher probability of having a preterm birth than those who are financially stable and with homes. Therefore, chronic stress, for example physically and emotionally stressful activities will result in preterm births.

Chronic stress could also be in form of the pregnancy itself. This is common with the young people who experience early pregnancies or those women who were raped and got pregnant. They could be worrying about their own health, baby's health or about labor. If the pregnancy is the cause of stress, it may result in a premature birth.

Chronic stress could also result from racism. Research has revealed that black women in the European and American countries have premature births because of racism and stigma. Racism could haunt an individual for all of their lifetime. The stigma and stress resulting from racism could result in deliveries before the 37th week of pregnancy.

Remedies to reduce preterm deliveries resulting from stress

Pregnant women need to identify the physical, emotional, mental sources of stress in their lives and try to find solutions of how to do away or suppress them. The expectant women should be under close watch by family members and friends, to be kept in good health, mental, emotional and physical state to reduce chances of encountering stress.

Cautious handling of emotions and moods

Expectant women usually have emotional changes and mood swings very often. These can be attributed to the pregnancy itself. The emotional and mood swing changes are brought about by the hormonal changes, which is something normal. The expectant women and the people around them should try to suppress the emotional and mood swing effect on stress so as to help cope with it. Mood swings are the most common in pregnant women and will result in increasing stress levels which is detrimental to the pregnancy.

Good health and keeping fit

Pregnant women should try and live a healthy life as well as keep their bodies fit to cope with stress. Good health implies that the women should eat

healthy foods and a balanced diet, get adequate sleeping hours to rest and avoid indulging in drugs. Drugs that should be avoided include alcohol, cigarettes and other types of drugs that contain harmful substances. The expectant women also need to have regular exercise sessions to help them maintain body fitness. Exercise will keep body fitness; avoid some pregnancy discomforts like fatigue, backaches, constipation and nausea. All these activities will help the expectant women to relieve stress hence will have reduced any risks of preterm delivery.

Stress therapies

There are several techniques that pregnant women can engage in to help relieve or contain stress. Such therapies include meditation sessions, yoga classes that are specially designed for expectant women, guided mental imagery as well as biofeedback. Such techniques are very helpful in stress management. The women can get guidance and help from a specialist or health care provider on which activity is best suited for them. Similarly helpful are the childbirth education classes which educate expectant women on relaxation techniques and reduction of anxiety and prepare them on what to look forward to at the time of labor and delivery.

Consultations

During pregnancy, pregnant women experience a lot of symptoms and changes. They do experience discomforts like frequent urination, backache, swelling, fatigue and nausea which cause stress. This is made worse if the woman is involved in many activities. The woman can help reduce such cases by consulting a health care provider as soon as she experiences any

symptoms. She will then get guidance on what to do to cope with the unnecessary stress and discomfort. The expectant women should also reduce the amount of activities she indulges herself so as to avoid stress that results from a lot of work.

Reliable support networks

The people around the expectant woman should be helpful by helping the woman relieve stress. People like friends, extended family and the partner should help relieve stress by keeping the woman company and helping them out in their chores and needs.

Conclusion

With scientific proof that there is a link between preterm deliveries and stress, there should be ways and means to reduce cases of pregnant women being stressed. Medical and health care providers, family members and the expectant women themselves should all work towards ensuring that pregnancies are well maintained and protected from probable interruptions like stress which leads to premature delivery.

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