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Pregnancy blood pressure and exercise - results from a randomized controlled trial

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A single blind, single center, randomized controlled trial, including 61 out of 105 women, initially enrolled in a controlled trial studying the effect of 12 weeks of aerobic exercise on maternal weight gain. The intervention included participation in two 60 minutes aerobic dance classes per week for 12 weeks, in addition to 30 minutes of daily self-imposed physical activity. Primary outcome was the mean adjusted difference in change in resting systolic and diastolic BP from baseline to after intervention. Secondary outcome was the mean adjusted difference in change in systolic BP during uphill treadmill walking at critical power. Measurements were performed prior to the intervention (gestation week 17.6±4.2) and after the intervention (gestation week 36.5±0.9). At baseline, resting systolic and diastolic BP was 115/66±12/7 and 115/67±10/9 mmHg in the exercise (n=35) and control group (n=26), respectively. After the intervention, resting systolic BP was 112±8 mmHg in the exercise group and 119±14 mmHg in the control group, giving a between group difference of 7.1 mmHg (95% CI 1.5 to 12.6, p=0.013). Diastolic BP was 71±9 and 76±8 mmHg, with a between group difference of 3.9 mmHg (95% CI 0.07 to 7.8, p=0.054). During uphill treadmill walking at critical power, the between group difference in systolic and diastolic BP was 5.9 mmHg (95% CI 4.4 to 16.1, p=0.254) and 5.5 mmHg (95% CI 0.2 to 11.1, p=0.059), respectively. In conclusion, aerobic exercise reduced resting systolic BP in healthy former inactive pregnant women.

Biography

Lene A H Haakstad is currently working as an Associate Professor and Researcher at Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Department of Sports Medicine and academic Chair in the Division of Fitness. Her main research area is maternal exercise and pregnancy outcomes. In this field, she has published several original research articles, as well as given oral presentations in national and international sports medicine conferences. She defended her thesis "Physical activity and weight gain during pregnancy" at NSSS in 2010. She is currently supervising three PhD students.

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