

Prevalence and Predictors of Prepregnancy Physical Activity: Results from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System

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Objectives: This study aimed to evaluate the prevalence of physical activity in the three months prior to pregnancy in a population-based sample of women and to identify individual sociodemographic, personal, health, and behavioral factors predictive of physical activity during this time.

Methods: This cross-sectional study used data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System to assess the prevalence of self-reported prepregnancy physical activity among 4,069 women who delivered a live birth in 2004 in Maine, North Carolina, and Washington State. A predictive model was developed using backward selection methods to identify independent predictors of physical activity in the three months prior to pregnancy.

Results: Overall, few women achieved the recommended amount of physical activity in the three months prior to pregnancy: 14.1% met recommendations for physical activity, 46.7% were moderately active, and 39.2% were inactive. Significant predictors of prepregnancy physical activity included prepregnancy body mass index, maternal education level, and parity. Women with three or more live births prior to the current pregnancy were most likely to be inactive prior to pregnancy (prevalence odds ratio 1.78, 95% CI 1.24 – 2.56).

Conclusions: Physical inactivity is common among women prior to pregnancy. Information on factors predictive of prepregnancy physical activity can be used in the development of clinical activities and public health interventions which aim to reduce rates of inactivity among women of reproductive age.

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