

## University of New Hampshire University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

---

Media Relations

Administrative Offices

---

11-27-2006

# UNH Seeks Pregnant Women For Groundbreaking Study On Stress

Beth Potier

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

---

### Recommended Citation

Potier, Beth, "UNH Seeks Pregnant Women For Groundbreaking Study On Stress" (2006). *UNH Today*. 1263.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1263>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).



## UNH Seeks Pregnant Women For Groundbreaking Study On Stress

Contact: [Beth Potier](#)  
603-862-1566  
UNH Media Relations

November 27, 2006

---

DURHAM, N.H. – Researchers from the University of New Hampshire are seeking volunteers for a groundbreaking pilot study that aims to learn how a pregnant woman's stress levels affect her baby's development.

"This is a real up-and-coming area in human development," says Barbara White, an associate professor of occupational therapy who is leading the study with associate professor of psychology Rob Drugan. "We might find that stress alone is an environmental influence that affects fetal development, much as smoking or drinking alcohol do. This would fit with what other researchers are finding."

White, whose previous research has explored stress and colicky babies and stress responses in relation to ADHD, says that research on animals indicates that prenatal stress can lead to developmental problems in their offspring. "The baby monkeys are clumsy and have poor social skills ... they fall out of trees," she says of studies that looked at maternal stress in primates.

Although the data on prenatal stress exposure and child outcomes is just emerging, White notes that "there's enough of a literature to suggest that stress doesn't bode well for developing humans." Too much stress hormone can impair brain development as well as blood vessel development in the placenta, she says, resulting in less nutrition reaching the fetus.

For this study, the team of researchers is recruiting 30 women, age 17 – 25, who are in their first or early second trimester of their first pregnancy and who are experiencing high levels of stress. The researchers will follow the women weekly throughout their pregnancies, and three times during their pregnancies they will collect saliva samples from the women to measure levels of stress hormones. They will continue to follow the mothers through their babies' second month of life.

All participants will receive an MP3 player, gift certificates, and access to resources to ensure their pregnancies remain healthy. Mothers selected randomly from among the participants will also receive stress reduction interventions of their choosing. "Some interventions are chosen by the individual, which is good stress management practice. Yoga isn't for everybody," says White.

To participate in the study, pregnant women should contact White at 603-862-2461 or [bpwhite@cisunix.unh.edu](mailto:bpwhite@cisunix.unh.edu), or UNH Cooperative Extension specialist Paula Gregory at 603-862-2909 or [paula.gregory@unh.edu](mailto:paula.gregory@unh.edu)

Other investigators in the study are Gregory; Kerryellen Vroman, assistant professor of occupational therapy; David Townson, associate professor of animal and nutritional sciences; and Suzanne Graham, assistant professor of education. This pilot study received funding from the UNH President's Fund for Excellence and the Carsey Institute at UNH.