

Abstract

Title: A Systematic Review: The impacts of non-pharmacological therapy interventions, such as exercise, on postpartum depressive symptoms in postpartum women?

Background: Postpartum depression is a psychological condition most often seen within six weeks after birth. Often confused with short-term “baby blues”, postpartum depression can be debilitating including excessive crying, insomnia, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, and other disruptive symptoms that can impede the new mother’s ability to care for herself and her baby. Postpartum depression often goes unrecognized by new mothers; however, when diagnosed, treatment regimens frequently include pharmacological interventions.

Objectives: This systematic review aimed to determine the effectiveness of nonpharmacological therapies, such as exercise regimens, in the treatment of postpartum depression.

Method: An electronic search on the nursing and allied health databases PubMed and CINAHL were used to identify eligible studies. Studies were systematically retrieved using a search strategy with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria and combined phrases such as “postpartum depression” and “treatment” and “exercise”. After full analysis and appraisal of the research, five studies were included in the final review.

Results: The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) was commonly used to measure the level of depression in postpartum mothers. Findings suggested that pregnant mothers who were not exercising prior to pregnancy but initiated an exercise regimen after birth had improved EPDS scores, or lower levels of depression. However, EPDS scores did not change for women who participated in exercise regimens both before and after pregnancy.

Conclusion: Overall, this systematic review demonstrates that initiating non-pharmacological interventions, such as exercise regimens, may improve levels of postpartum depression in postpartum women.

Keywords: Postpartum Depression; Non-Pharmacological Interventions; Postpartum