



A good night's sleep may be what you need

Unraveling a pregnancy mystery

Why do perfectly healthy women develop certain pregnancy complications? For some, sleep apnea's to blame. According to a study by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in New Brunswick, **sleep apnea quadruples the chances of high blood pressure in pregnancy and doubles the risk of gestational diabetes.**

Though this breathing disorder affects less than 1 percent of women of childbearing age, it's much more common in those who are pregnant, since weight gain and hormonal changes can interfere with breathing. The condition causes your airway to narrow and breathing to stop momentarily—sometimes hundreds of times a night. The lack of oxygen puts your body into “fight or flight” mode, pumping out hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, which send blood pressure soaring. Your body also produces more glucose so there's plenty of energy to respond to the “threat.” Over time, diabetes can develop.

Fortunately, women may be able to prevent or manage their pregnancy complications through sleep-apnea treatment, which usually involves inhaling air from a machine during the night. Sounds scary, but take heart: Pregnancy-related apnea usually resolves or improves after the baby is born.

—Laurie Budgar

MOM TIP!

“When I'm stressed, I inhale for four counts and exhale for eight several times. It really slows me down and forces me to relax.”

—Marisa Sandora Carr
Maplewood, NJ

HOOP IT UP!

Move over, dumbbells—the hula hoop is the next big thing in mom fitness. L.A.-based fitness instructor Rayna McInturf launched Hoopnotic Hoopdance, a workout using a re-vamped version of the classic toy, in 2006. Since then, hooping has been making a steady comeback.

“Hula-hooping is a fun way to burn some calories,” says *Parenting* Mom Squad fitness expert Sharon Monplaisir. The hoop that McInturf uses is larger and heavier than the traditional kind and, she says, is a better fit for adults and helps burn more calories (her versions are \$40 and up at hoopnotica.com). But the type you grew up with works, too. To get the most out of this old-school workout:

Use the right stance. Moving in a circular motion—a common mistake—makes it harder to keep the hoop up. Instead, stand with one foot in front of the other, hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and tuck in your pelvis. Then shift your weight from one leg to the other.

Choose music with a varied tempo so you can practice both fast and slow speeds. Going faster burns more calories, while slowing down requires more subtle movement that tones core muscles and helps define your waistline.

Have your kids join in. The more fun you all have, the more likely you'll stick with it. —Lauren Passell