



Mind–body interventions may be beneficial for pregnancy anxiety

Clinical question

How effective are mind–body interventions during pregnancy in preventing or treating women’s anxiety and influencing perinatal outcomes?

Bottom line

Compared with usual care, in 1 study imagery may have had a positive effect on anxiety during labour, decreasing anxiety in the early and middle stages of labour. Another study showed that imagery had a positive effect on anxiety and depression in the immediate postpartum period. Autogenic training might be effective for decreasing women’s anxiety before delivering. No harmful effects were reported for any mind–body interventions in the studies included in the review.

Caveat

It was not possible to undertake a meta-analysis due to the small number of studies per intervention and the diversity of outcome measurements. The main limitations of the studies were the lack of blinding and insufficient details on the methods used for randomisation. None of the included studies reported any of the neonatal secondary outcomes.

Context

Mind–body interventions, such as imagery and autogenic training can reduce anxiety. They can be learned in order to induce mental relaxation and alter negative thinking related to anxiety. This can change the perception of a stressful event, leading to better adapted behaviour and coping skills.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Marc I et al. Mind–body interventions during pregnancy for preventing or treating women’s anxiety. *Cochrane Reviews*, 2011, Issue 7. Article No. CD007559. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007559.pub2.

This review contains 8 studies involving 556 participants.

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