



ZOOM (B)

Eating more fish could reduce postpartum depression

Emerging evidence suggests many pregnant women are deficient in omega-3

MONTREAL, 15 November, 2012 – Low levels of omega-3 may be behind postpartum depression, according to a review lead by Gabriel Shapiro of the University of Montreal and the Research Centre at the Sainte-Justine Mother and Child Hospital. Women are at the highest risk of depression during their childbearing years, and the birth of a child may trigger a depressive episode in vulnerable women. Postpartum depression is associated with diminished maternal health as well as developmental and health problems for her child. "The literature shows that there could be a link between pregnancy, omega-3 and the chemical reaction that enables serotonin, a mood regulator, to be released into our brains," Shapiro said. "Many women could bring their omega-3 intake to recommended levels." The findings were announced by the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry on November 15, 2012.

Because omega-3 is transferred from the mother to her fetus and later to her breastfeeding infant, maternal omega-3 levels decrease during pregnancy, and remain lowered for at least six-weeks following the birth. Furthermore, in addition to the specific biological circumstances of pregnant women, it has been found in the US that most people do not consume sufficient amounts of omega-3. "These findings suggest that new screening strategies and prevention practices may be useful," Shapiro said, noting that the study was preliminary and the further research would be needed to clarify the link and identify the reasons for it.

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