Birmingham researchers explore benefits of physical activity on postnatal depression

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Scientists at the University of Birmingham are appealing for new mothers to take part in a study into the effects of physical activity on postnatal depression.

About ten per cent of new mothers develop postnatal depression after giving birth. Doctors often prescribe antidepressants and offer talking therapies, if they are available. But now researchers in Primary Care and Clinical Sciences at the University want to find out if encouraging women to be physically active can also help, and they are calling for volunteers from across the West Midlands to join in the study.

Dr Amanda Daley, who is leading the research, says: 'Depression following childbirth can have a substantial impact on the woman, the child and the family as a whole. There is therefore a need to examine ways of helping women experiencing PND, and encouraging them to be more active may be one way.'

The team aims to recruit 208 women with postnatal depression who have given birth in the last six months and are living in the West Midlands. Women will be involved for six months. All women will continue with their usual treatment, if they are having any.

In addition, half will be allocated a 'Physical Activity Facilitator' (PAF) who will visit them in their home and help them to try to be more active. 'The PAF will talk to each woman about what sort of activities she likes, and find out what is available in her local community,' explains Dr Daley. 'Mostly we are trying to encourage pram walking in the local community – something that doesn't cost anything, but is active and gets women out of the house'.

Each woman will have the chance to meet and consult with the Activity Facilitator on two occasions at home, and then stay in touch by telephone.

At the end of the study the researchers will assess whether women who were offered the intervention with physical activity support were less likely to be depressed than those who were not. Encouraging exercise may also have benefits in terms of reducing weight.

Women who would like to take part should contact Ruth Blamey on 0121 414 6891 or by email – **r.v.blamey@bham.ac.uk (mailto:r.v.blamey@bham.ac.uk)** .

For more information, please contact Jenni Ameghino, University of Birmingham Press Office, 0121 415 8134. Mobile: 07768 924156.

Notes to editors:

Dr Daley is available for interview. Please contact the press office to arrange.

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