

**Motherwell® Instructor Update  
March 2008**

**Dear Instructors, Trainers and Administrators;**

**There are wonderful things happening in the wellness community all over the world. People are finally realizing the benefits of living healthy lifestyles for themselves as well as their families. Worksite wellness programs are at an all-time high and research is validating the importance of women's wellness during the childbearing years.**

**In this update, there is some evidence that changes in diet and lifestyle may help improve ovulatory infertility and prevent miscarriage. Another study indicates that sleep plays an important role in predicting postpartum depression. There is also a handout for your class participants on improving balance during and after pregnancy.**

**Working with pregnant women and new moms, we have the unique opportunity to impact future generations by offering high quality programs that not only address the physical aspects of childbirth but also the mental and spiritual parts of the total experience for mother, father and of course, the baby.**

**For this reason, I have decided to combine all Motherwell Programs into one course which addresses the total health of women before, during and after pregnancy. The new course is entitled: *Motherwell® Mindful Pregnancy and Parenting Fitness Course*. This course will include aerobic exercise, core strengthening exercises, weight training component, water fitness exercises, yoga, relaxation, meditation, stroller exercises, parenting information and much more.**

**Since the inception of Motherwell almost 30 years ago, many wonderful changes have evolved in the fitness arena for pregnant women and new mothers. When we first started developing Motherwell Programs, there was nothing like it anywhere. Now, there are instructor training programs popping up all over. Thirty years ago, obstetricians were nervous about recommending exercise to pregnant women. Now, through research, we know the many benefits derived from exercise during and after pregnancy.**

**By combining all of Motherwell Programs into one, there are more options for instructors to succeed in this competitive environment by being able to teach whatever programs seem to be most popular in their given areas. As many of you already know, the success of any educational program is based on being able to meet the individual needs of the class participants.**

**So, by offering all aspects of wellness and fitness into one course, you have all the tools you need to adapt programming to meet these needs.**

**If you are currently teaching a Motherwell Program and want to continue offering your classes in the same format as before, that is fine. With this new program, pregnant women will be exposed to a variety of modalities to help them prepare as well as recover from the childbirth experience in positive ways.**

**We are still working on materials for this course and plan to roll out this program over the next couple of months. So, stay tuned.....**

**In the meantime, read over the update materials, complete the Instructor Assessment and return either by mail, fax or email. Enjoy the end of the winter season and stay well!!**

**Warm regards,  
Bonnie Berk, RN, MS, ERYT  
Motherwell Founder**

**PS – Check out my new website: [www.bonnieberk.com](http://www.bonnieberk.com) for information about the new Yoga Alliance Approved course being offered: *Bonnie Berk's Yoga for Health* as well as many wellness tips and articles. Let me know if you are interested in becoming a registered yoga teacher with Yoga Alliance.**

## **Underweight and Miscarriage**

**When researchers in London studied 600 adult women who had miscarried and 6,000 with successful pregnancies, they discovered that very underweight women were 72% more likely to miscarry during the first three months. Those with a body mass index (BMI) below 18.5 were especially prone to miscarry.**

**The causes of miscarriage are not fully understood. Well-established risk factors include increased maternal age, a history of previous miscarriage, and infertility. Other factors such as alcohol use, smoking, and extreme emotional stress might play a role, as well as excessive caffeine intake. Eating small amounts of chocolate daily may actually be beneficial, according to the study.**

**Women who had a previous abortion or those who got pregnant through in vitro fertilization (IVF) were 60% and 40%, respectively, more likely to lose the baby in the first trimester. On the other hand, those who had a “planned” pregnancy increased their chances of carrying the baby to term by 60%. Additional findings were that morning sickness may actually be a good sign, an indication that the pregnancy is progressing well.**

**Women who on most days ate fresh fruit and vegetables appeared to have a better outcome than those whose meals did not regularly include them. Of special importance, women who supplemented their diet with folic acid and iron, or vitamins containing them, showed the most pronounced benefits – cutting their risk of miscarriage in half.**

**In the United Kingdom, about 1 in 5 pregnancies end in miscarriage each year. Researchers intended this study to provide helpful information to the thousands of women who do not understand why they miscarried and to suggest ways to prevent it in the future.**

**Whenever possible, women who want to become pregnant are encouraged to do pre-pregnancy planning with their doctor. Any existing medical conditions such as excessive thinness, obesity or diabetes should be treated and if possible controlled before conception is attempted. After conceiving, it is important to have the pregnancy followed by a physician.**

**The findings of this study are published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.**

**[Source: BBC News](#) , December 6, 2006**

## **Trying to Get Pregnant? Make Better Lifestyle Choices!**

According to a report from the Harvard News Office, infertility affects one in six couples. Ovulation problems have been identified in 18-30 percent of those cases.

Recently, researchers followed 17,544 married women who were participants in the Nurses' Health Study II based at the Brigham and Women's Hospital and found that those who followed a combination of five or more lifestyle factors experienced more than 80 percent less relative risk of infertility due to ovulatory factors compared to women who engaged in none of the factors.

The research team from the Harvard School of Public Health devised a scoring system on dietary and lifestyle factors that previous studies have found to predict ovulatory disorder infertility. Factors included:

- Ratio of mono-unsaturated to trans fats in diet
- Protein consumption
- Carbohydrates consumption
- Dairy consumption
- Iron consumption
- Multivitamin use
- Body Mass Index
- Physical Activity

The researchers assigned a "fertility diet" score of one to five points; the higher the score, the lower the risk of infertility due to ovulatory disorders. Results showed that women with the highest fertility diet scores made the following lifestyle choices:

- Ate less trans fats and sugar
- Consumed more vegetable protein than animal protein
- Ate more fiber
- Consumed more iron
- Took more multivitamins
- Had lower BMI
- Exercised for longer periods of time each day
- Consumed more high-fat dairy products

The lead author of the study, Jorge Chavarro, said: " We analyzed what happens if you follow one, two, three, four or more different factors. What we found was that as women started following more of these recommendations their risk of infertility dropped substantially for every one of the dietary and lifestyle strategies undertaken. In fact, we found a

**six-fold difference in ovulatory infertility risk between women following five or more low-risk dietary and lifestyle habits and those following none.”**

**This study definitely gives us food for thought!**

**For more information, check out: [www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2007](http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2007)**

## **Lack of Sleep may be a Reliable Predictor of Postpartum Depression**

**In a study recently reported in the *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing*, suggests that chronic fatigue after delivery is a better predictor for depression than stress or even a history of depression.**

**Researchers from Ohio State University recruited 31 pregnant women who were near end of their third trimester. Each woman had uneventful pregnancies with a normal vaginal birth.**

**Between 36-38 weeks of pregnancy, each woman received a home visit from one of the researchers. At that time, the women completed questionnaires on fatigue, stress, and both symptoms and history of depression. They were also asked to provide a saliva sample which helped the researchers identify those women who had high cortisol levels as a result of stress.**

**As each person delivered her baby, she called the researcher who then made a home visit within about seven days. There were also visits scheduled two weeks and four weeks after delivery. At each visit, the new mom completed the same questionnaire and saliva samples were repeated.**

**By the end of the fourth week, 11 of the 31 women in the study showed symptoms that indicated depression. There were seven of these women that had a family history of depression and of this group, four also had histories of depression themselves.**

**Of the 11 women that showed symptoms of depression, 10 (91%) also displayed symptoms in the fourth and final week of the study and reported higher-than-normal levels of fatigue two weeks earlier.**

**According to Elizabeth Corwin, the study's lead author and an associate professor of nursing at Ohio State University, " A personal history of depression is an excellent way to predict which women are at risk for postpartum depression. Still, using that as the sole screening tool would have left seven of the women undiagnosed. Likewise, a family history of depression is a risk factor. But by using family history alone, we would have missed four women who went on to develop signs of depression." Researchers agree that it was ultimately fatigue that best predicted which women would develop postpartum depression.**

**Currently, there is no standard way to screen for postpartum depression, which can be detrimental to the entire family unit. Initially, it can impair bonding between mom and baby, an important time in infant behavioral**

**and cognitive development. It can also negatively affect mom's self-esteem as well as the relationship with her partner and other children.**

**Treatment of postpartum depression includes counseling and/or anti-depressants. The earlier a woman is identified as having depression after the birth of her baby, and the earlier treatment is given, the less chance there will be negative impact on mom, baby and the family at large.**

**Researchers hope that more health care providers screen new moms for prolonged fatigue and possible depression before things get out of hand. Corwin comments, " if a women's health care provider knew early on that a patient was slipping down this slope, he or she could intervene. It may not take much to screen for it, either – the questions in the fatigue test that we used took about two to three minutes to answer."**

**For more information on this study, contact Elizabeth Corwin, ( 614) 292-0309 or send email to: [ecorwin@con.ohio-state.edu](mailto:ecorwin@con.ohio-state.edu)**

**Motherwell® Handout**  
**Improving Your Balance During and After Pregnancy**

**During and after pregnancy, many changes affect the women's ability to maintain balance. As pregnancy progresses, the growing uterus moves the center of gravity forward, predisposing women to lean more forward. In the postpartum period, while the baby is no longer affecting the center of balance, the lasting effects of the hormone, relaxin, causes ligament laxity which makes the joints unstable. This continues for about six months after delivery.**

**For these reasons, women in the second and third trimesters as well as early postpartum should avoid climbing ladders, hiking on steep or uneven terrain and avoiding all activities that increase the risk of falling.**

**To preserve good neuromuscular control and help prevent injury, it is recommended to include simple balance exercises in an expectant and new mom's exercise routine. Any type of physical activity that gets a person's arms and legs moving in coordination improves balance like walking. Exercise works the muscles and stimulates nerve communication needed for balance and coordination.**

**Balancing on one foot and then the other is good practice that you can do everyday. A good time to do this is while doing dishes or brushing your teeth. The more you practice balancing, the better you will become. Below are some balancing exercises to try. For safety reasons, perform with your eyes open and focused at a 45 degree angle. Practice these exercises in a location free from obstacles in case you lose your balance. A good idea in the beginning is to practice next to a wall or use a chair for added support.**

**A. Balance Pose**



B. Tree



C. Dancer



D. Hand to Knee / Hand to toe



E. Hero III



F. One-Legged Chair



G. Easy Balance with Arm and Head Rotation



H. Sunbird / Balancing Cat



I. Half Crescent Moon



**Motherwell® Instructor Assessment**  
**Winter/Spring Update 2008**

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility where you are teaching classes: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number(    ) \_\_\_\_\_

1. A recent study in London indicated that women with a body mass index (BMI) below \_\_\_\_\_ were especially prone to miscarry.

- a. 25    b. 23    c. 20    d. 18.5

2. According to research, which is the best way to screen for postpartum depression?

- a. cortisol levels                      b. fatigue  
c. history of depression              d. family history of depression

3. Name two reasons why pregnant women and new mothers are more at risk for falls:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name five (5) lifestyle changes that positively affected women's fertility:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_  
e. \_\_\_\_\_

5. True or False: Any type of physical activity that gets a person's arms and legs moving in coordination improves balance like walking.

6. What is a good balancing exercise you can do everyday?

- a. squat    b. pushups    c. bridges    d. standing on one foot

7. Name two safety considerations when recommending balance poses?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Why is it important to identify new moms with depression early in the postpartum period?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What are three well established risk factors for miscarriage?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

10. Women who supplemented their diet with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, were able to cut their risk of miscarriage in half.

a. calcium and protein    b. folic acid and iron    c. omega-3 and folic acid

11. True or False: Eating small amounts of chocolate daily may actually be beneficial in preventing miscarriage.

12. According to a recent study, which common discomfort of pregnancy was a good indicator pregnancy progressing well? \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this completed assessment to: Bonnie Berk, Inc, 1220 Hillside Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013 or email to: [bonnie@bonnieberk.com](mailto:bonnie@bonnieberk.com) or fax to: (717) 258-1241.