

Do the Symptoms of Fibromyalgia Change During Pregnancy?

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Many fibromyalgia patients ask about the effect of pregnancy on fibromyalgia symptoms. This study used an online questionnaire to ask fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) respondents about their pain and other symptoms during pregnancy.

METHODS: Six hundred and twenty-nine respondents with self-described fibromyalgia completed an online questionnaire and 43 FMS patients completed the same written survey in a rheumatology office. The on-line questionnaire was administered by the fibromyalgia volunteer organization AFFTER (Advocates for Fibromyalgia Funding, Treatment, Education and Research). Those FMS patients who became pregnant after developing FMS were asked about the effect of pregnancy on their fibromyalgia symptoms.

RESULTS: Respondents were predominantly middle-aged (ages 45-55), and Caucasian, with about 40% involved in online support groups. 582 FMS patients responded to a question regarding pregnancy, and 106 had gone through at least one pregnancy. 36/582 (6.2%) respondents reported that fibromyalgia came about during or right after pregnancy. 46/106 (43.3%) patients with FMS described an increase in FMS symptoms during their first pregnancy and 51/90 (56.7%) reported an increase of FMS symptoms during a subsequent pregnancy. 37/106 (34.9%) FMS patients noted no change in symptoms during the first pregnancy and 30/90 (33.3%) experienced no change in symptoms with a subsequent pregnancy. 23/106 (21.6%) FMS patients responded that they had a decrease in FMS symptoms during a first pregnancy and 9/90 (10.0%) during a subsequent pregnancy.

CONCLUSIONS: According to this survey, there does not appear to be a consistent impact of pregnancy on fibromyalgia, with 46/106 (43.3%) noting an increase in symptoms during the first pregnancy, and 51/90 (56.7%) during a subsequent pregnancy. More patients experienced no change or an improvement in symptoms during the first pregnancy, but greater pain and other symptoms during a subsequent pregnancy. FMS patients worry their symptoms will intensify during pregnancy, and they will not be able to discontinue or limit their medications. The course of FMS during pregnancy is variable.

INTRODUCTION

Fibromyalgia patients sometimes ask about the effect of pregnancy on their symptoms. The preponderance of fibromyalgia subjects are female, sex hormones probably play a strong role in affecting these symptoms and etiology of FMS

In the *Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology* (1997), Ostensen et. al. compared 26 patients who had borne children after developing the symptoms of fibromyalgia with 18 patients who had their children before the onset of fibromyalgia. There appeared to be a negative effect of pregnancy in the postpartum period on fibromyalgia symptoms, and the author reported increased functional impairment and disability in the patients who had pregnancies after developing FMS.

This study used an online questionnaire to inquire about their pain and other of FMS symptoms during pregnancy.

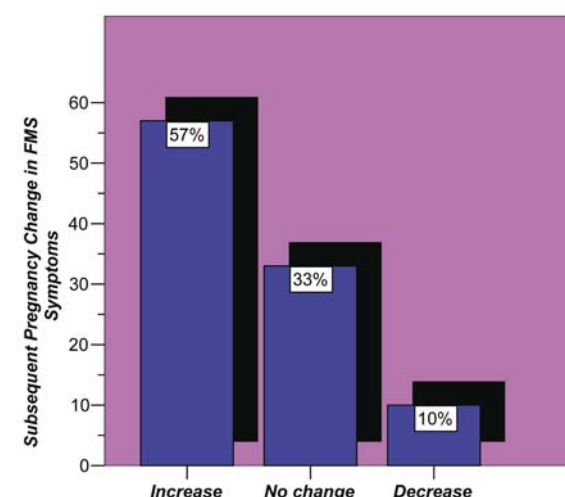
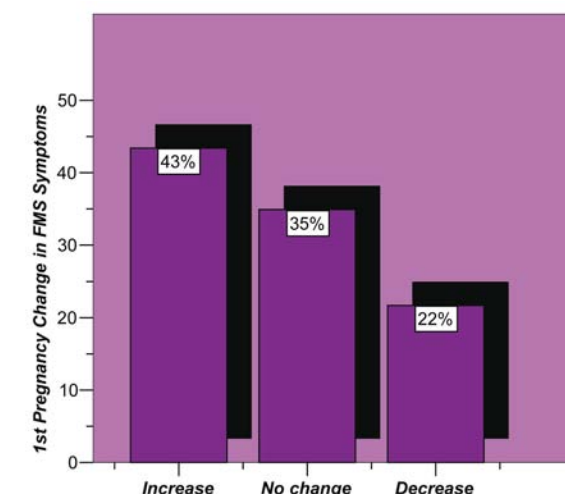
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CONCLUSIONS

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FMS patients worry their symptoms will intensify during pregnancy. However, the course of FMS during pregnancy is variable, and there is no consistent effect on FMS symptoms.