



**27 August 2003**

**A Natural Treatment for Depression in Pregnancy and after Baby's Birth: Omega 3 Fatty Acids**

Women who suffer from depression during and after pregnancy are being targeted for a study to determine if Omega 3 - the product derived from fish oil- is an effective natural therapy.

The Royal Hospital for Women and the Black Dog Institute are conducting the study and is immediately seeking volunteers.

"The study is based on findings indicating that low levels of Omega 3 fatty acids may make some women more vulnerable to depression," according to Dr Anne-Marie Rees, the Hospital's Senior Perinatal Psychiatry Registrar based at the Royal Hospital for Women and the Black Dog Institute.

"Added to this is the fact that during pregnancy and lactation, women are often depleted of Omega 3 due to diversion to the fetus/newborn," Dr Rees said.

The dietary intake of Omega 3 is also particularly low in western countries and is one factor associated with higher rates of depression.

Omega 3 fatty acids are essential for fetal and infant brain development and are added to infant formula – they thus have the benefit of being totally safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding

Associate Professor Marie-Paule Austin, from the Royal Hospital for Women, who has been working in this area of perinatal depression for many years, said that many women suffering from depression are unwilling to take antidepressants at this time of life but they now have an opportunity to participate in a trial where natural products are used.

Women invited to participate in the trial need to live in Sydney and be able to attend the Royal Hospital for Women at Randwick for weekly review (a 15 minute appointment) over a six week period. They should either be pregnant or haven given birth six months prior and suffer significant depression for the past 2 weeks.

Volunteers currently taking antidepressants are excluded from the trial.

Following research guidelines, study participants receive treatment with either Omega 3 or placebo for the six week period and all treatment is free of charge.

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media/newsreleases/index.cfm>

Volunteers wishing to participate should contact Dr Rees on 02 9382 4389 or email: [ReesA@sesahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ReesA@sesahs.nsw.gov.au) Volunteers will be asked to complete three simple questionnaires to assess their suitability for Omega 3 study.

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For further information: Contact Ian Dose at the Black Dog Institute  
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