

Existence of Pregnancy Brain Disputed



The Pregnancy Brain

Pregnant women commonly report lapses in memory and reasoning abilities. One pregnant woman described parking her car and leaving the dog with the windows sufficiently rolled down. Immediately returning to make sure everything was alright for the dog, she found her keys in the ignition and the car running.

Known variously as *pregnancy brain*, *mommy brain*, *pregnancy amnesia*, or *momnesia*, medical staff have been advising pregnant women to expect increased forgetfulness and less ability to concentrate. The advice was primarily based on an early study claiming that during pregnancy, women's brains decreased in size and when compared to testing of non-pregnant women they did worse in memory and verbal skills.

New research from a ten year study of 1,241 women by Professor Helen Christensen of Australian National University, Canberra showed **no changes in the brains or brain performance of women who were tested before, during and after pregnancy**. Based on these results medical staff are being urged to abandon this pregnancy brain myth.

Professor Christensen acknowledges that pregnant women do

experience episodes of memory loss. Some of the explanations unrelated to the brain itself are –

- pregnant women become unfocused due to their attention being redirected to the pregnancy, the upcoming birth and what it will mean and how this will affect them
- lack of sleep
- multitasking to a higher level
- increased tiredness related to the physical demands on the body and not resting enough
- a built-in evolutionary safeguard that allows women to forget about things unrelated and focus on their newborn

Dr. Louann Brizendine, director of Women's Mood and Hormone Clinic, University of California adds that the brain experiences surges of **estrogen** and **progesterone** of 15 to 40 times its normal amount. These hormones are also known to affect spatial memory i.e, where you put your keys, parked the car or left your wallet.

Dr. Brizendine sums up the condition of *pregnancy brain* as knowing that **“Your IQ doesn't change, but your priorities sure do.”**

While science may attribute memory lapses and inability to concentrate to something else, many women and men the world over will continue to dispute that ***pregnancy brain*** is a myth.

Here are a few on-line comments that will keep the argument going.

“Well I don't know about anyone else, but I'm sure my baby has taken my brain when I had her... my memory is terrible since I had her.” Dani, West Yorkshire

“It ain't a myth, my wife and two daughters are living proof, I'd never heard of it until I read the article but I sure as hell noticed the difference after they had had children.”

Richard, Worcester

“I have a sneaking suspicion that most mothers reading this are wetting themselves laughing.” Toni Summers Hargis, expat.
Chicago

The recommended solution to this condition during pregnancy is to

- 1. write things down**
- 2. get more sleep**

Great advice so long as you can remember to write it down and find the time to get more sleep. But, then that applies to all of us women.

Happy Mothers Day

By Joyce Hansen