



Eating disorders during pregnancy

Joana Gonçalves¹  0009-0006-3915-2345
Maria-Raquel G. Silva^{1,2,3,4,5}  0000-0001-8170-3119

¹ FP-I3ID, FP-BHS, and Faculty of Health Sciences, University Fernando Pessoa, Porto, Portugal

² Molecular Oncology and Viral Pathology Group, Research Center of IPO-Porto (CI-IPOP) &RISE@CI-IPOP (Health Research Network), Portuguese Oncology Institute of Porto (IPO-Porto), Porto Comprehensive Cancer Center Raquel Seruca (Porto.CCC), Porto, Portugal

³ CHRC, Comprehensive Health Research Centre - Group of Sleep, Chronobiology and Sleep Disorders, Nova Medical School, Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal

⁴ CIAS, Research Centre for Anthropology and Health – Group of Human Biology, Health and Society, University of Coimbra, Portugal

⁵ CENC, Sleep Medicine Center, Lisbon, Portugal

ARTICLE INFO

Received 13 May 2026
Accepted 08 June 2026

Keywords:

nutrition
eating disorders
pregnancy
maternal health
infant health

Corresponding Author:

Maria-Raquel G. Silva; Fernando Pessoa University - Faculty of Health Sciences, Porto, Portugal; raquel@ufp.edu.pt

DOI: 10.62741/ahrj.v3iSuppl. 2.217

This article is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Few research has been conducted concerning insufficient body weight gain and eating disorders during pregnancy, which is a unique stage of a woman's life.

Objective: To investigate the prevalence of eating disorders during pregnancy and their effects on physiological changes in pregnant women.

Methodology: A narrative literature review was conducted, using PubMed, b-on, and Google Scholar databases, with the following combination of keywords: ("pregnancy" OR "pregnant") AND ("eating disorders"). Inclusion criteria were: clinical trials and randomized controlled trials, between 2017 and 2023, considering human subjects, and written in English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish. A manual search of 27 scientific articles was also conducted from November 2022 to June 2023.

Results: From 5351 scientific publications initially found, 59 were included, suggesting that eating disorders during pregnancy represent significant risks to maternal and infant's health. Pregnant women with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa faced 1.69 to 2.90 times the risk of delivering a low-birth-weight baby (<2500g) or slow fetal growth (< the 10th percentile, 1.5 times higher risk). Most common comorbidities associated with eating disorders were binge eating (43%), anxiety (45% to 50%), and perinatal depression (50%). Furthermore, methods used to diagnose these eating disorders in pregnant women were mostly consisted in applying validated questionnaires to identify eating disorders.

Conclusions: It is urgent to articulate an early intervention to recognizing risk and protective factors associated with the evolution of eating disorders in pregnant women and ensure optimal fetal development.

Contributions: Conceptualization: JG and MRGS; Data curation: JG and MRGS; Formal Analysis: JG and MRGS; Investigation: JG and MRGS; Methodology: JG and MRGS; Project administration: JG and MRGS; Resources: JG and MRGS; Software: JG and MRGS; Supervision: MRGS; Validation: JG and MRGS; Visualization: JG and MRGS; Writing – original draft: JG and MRGS; Writing – review & editing: JG and MRGS.

Please cite this article as: Gonçalves J, Silva MRG. Eating disorders during pregnancy. *Athena Health & Research Journal*. 2026; 3(Suppl. 2). doi: 10.62741/ahrj.v3iSuppl. 2.217