STUDY AIMS TO DISPEL PREGNANT MYTH OF EATING FOR TWO

Catherine Grinowski | CH Agency

EDMONTON — Moms to be, you are not eating for two, more like 1.2.

University of Alberta researchers are hoping to find strategies for women to gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy and dispel the myth of eating away post-partum weight.

When Ximena Ramos, a student at the Faculty of Public Health, was pregnant with her son, friends would insist she give in to sweet treats.

As an aerobics instructor, she kept active, but she felt the 40 pounds she added on. Her son weighed 6.5 pounds at birth. She was more easily tired while cleaning the house, or teaching fitness classes.

"You kind of fall down on the priority in your pregnancy," she said. "Everybody around me kept telling me it's OK to gain weight because that's what you do when you're pregnant. Basically, they gave me permission."

Then, as a busy mom and a student, she slipped breakfast and ate whatever was in front of her. She typed her thesis and breastfed at the same time. Her father died when her son was two years old, and the depression added to the weight.

Ramos said now she realizes she needs to be healthy to be a good mom, and she wants to be a good role model for her now seven-year-old son.

Researcher Dr. Rhonda Bell said the study will build on previous studies that found 60% of pregnant women gain more weight than is recommended. Often, women take pregnancy as a license to eat as much as they want, or whatever they want.

"You're not eating for two, it's more like 1.2," she said.

The recommended weight gain depends on the woman's pre-pregnancy weight. Usually, it's about 29.5 to 49.5 extra calories per day during the second and third trimester — about an apple and a serving of yogurt. She added the extra calories should come from Canada's Food Guide.

"It's not like six pieces of lasagna and half a cake," she said.

Bell said a few people talk about the post-partum period and the study will measure how many calories women expend during the postpartum period.

"We suspect women expend fewer calories than most people think," she said.

They will compare women who have lost the weight they gained during pregnancy and those who haven't.

"One of the hopes is that we will come up with really practical strategies," Bell said.