

CRE HiPP BITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

A bite-sized summary of a piece of research supported by CRE HiPP



Exploring the barriers and enablers to healthy lifestyle behaviours and wellbeing of working women during the preconception and pregnancy periods

Why was this research needed?

BACKGROUND

- Many women of reproductive age enter pregnancy with a high BMI and have low adherence to healthy diet and physical activity guidelines.
- The preconception period is a 'window of opportunity' to improve health across the lifespan.
- Workplaces have the capacity to reach large numbers of women during the preconception and pregnancy life phases.
- Workplaces also present specific challenges to the health and wellbeing of their employees.
- We explored the individual, interpersonal, and organisational factors that facilitate or prevent healthy lifestyles and wellbeing for preconception and pregnant women in their university workplace setting.
- This qualitative study contributed to the development of a tailored intervention.

Multi-level barriers and enablers identified

FINDINGS

- We conducted 5 focus groups with 25 women across 2 workplace locations.
- Some women saw health and wellbeing-related behaviours as 'optional' when compared with non-negotiable needs, i.e. work and parenting.
- Top-down coordination of wellbeing opportunities and support for preconception healthy lifestyle behaviours would benefit working women.
- Many participants critiqued the food landscape and inconsistent access to parenting amenities at their workplace.
- Certain aspects of the work role were identified as a barrier to wellbeing, e.g. part-time status or flexible working arrangements.

“I totally get the message that health is also not optional, but the reality is if there’s ten things on the list, and I can only get through seven of them, I have to . . . prioritise these other things”

Focus Group Participant

Madden SK, Blewitt C, Ahuja KDK, Skouteris H, Bailey CM, Hills AP, & Hill B. Workplace healthy lifestyle determinants and wellbeing needs across the preconception and pregnancy periods: A qualitative study informed by the COM-B model. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2021;18(8):4154. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18084154>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Future workplace interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of preconception and pregnant women should first conduct a thorough assessment of women’s needs. Our findings suggest that a multi-pronged and contextualised intervention, focused on enhancing capability, opportunity, and motivation, would best support women in this workplace setting.

What is CRE HiPP

The Centre of Research Excellence in Health in Preconception and Pregnancy (CRE HiPP) is an innovative, passionate, multi-disciplinary team of researchers, clinicians, students and consumers.

We aim to refine and implement health promotion, lifestyle improvement, and obesity prevention strategically targeting women preconception and during pregnancy, to improve the health of women and the next generation.

Find out more about CRE HiPP on our website hipp.org.au.

