

Review Finds Pregnancy Generally Safe For Chiari Women

Since the average age of adult symptom onset for Chiari is around 30, and it disproportionately affects women, some of the most common concerns for new patients in this group surround pregnancy issues. Specific concerns include whether the strain of pushing during labor will aggravate symptoms, the effects and risks of the various types of anesthesia commonly used, and what the effects of the pregnancy itself might be on the Chiari condition. Although there is not an abundance of published studies on the topic, a recent review of the literature may help alleviate some of these concerns. For their review, the authors searched for studies and case descriptions published between 1991 and 2017. In total they found 25 publications that represented 34 patients and 35 births. Two-thirds of the women (66%) were diagnosed with Chiari before becoming pregnant, 20% were diagnosed during pregnancy, and 14% after pregnancy. About a third of the women had undergone decompression surgery prior to pregnancy, 2 women underwent surgery shortly after delivery, and one woman actually underwent surgery during pregnancy. Although time of delivery was not reported in 15 cases, of those reported only 4 were premature and none of those were due to Chiari related issues. The pregnancy management in the cases represented a variety of delivery and anesthesia methods. About half were Cesarean deliveries, many of them planned to avoid the risk of elevated intracranial pressure during labor. Although nearly 80% of the women did experience Chiari related symptoms during pregnancy, only 4 reported worsening of symptoms and two of these cases were women who had not yet been diagnosed with Chiari. Interestingly, there were also two cases of spontaneous resolution where the cerebellar tonsils were noticeably higher on MRI after the pregnancy and in both cases existing syrinxes got smaller. Although the evidence is still quite limited, the authors believe that in general pregnancy in women with Chiari can be successfully managed with proper multi-disciplinary care.

Source: Chiari I malformation and pregnancy: a comprehensive review of the literature to address common questions and to guide management. Sastry R, Sufianov R, Laviv Y, Young BC, Rojas R, Bhadelia R, Boone MD, Kasper EM. *Acta Neurochir (Wien)*. 2020 Apr 18.

Conquer Chiari's research updates highlight and summarize interesting publications from the medical literature while providing background and context. The summaries do contain some medical terminology and assume a general understanding of Chiari. Introductory information and many more research articles can be found www.conquerchiari.org