

# Obesity raises risk of complications in pregnancy, study shows

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Expectant mothers who are obese are much more likely to suffer from minor complications such as heart burn and chest infections during pregnancy, a study suggests.

Research by the University of Edinburgh found that obese mothers-to-be were nearly 10 times more likely to suffer from chest infections, and more than twice as likely to suffer from headaches and heartburn, compared with pregnant women of a healthy weight.

Researchers studied the records of more than 650 pregnant women, of whom nearly half were overweight or obese at the beginning of their [pregnancy](#). The study took into account factors such as age and smoking.

Obese pregnant women were three times more likely to have carpal tunnel syndrome, which occurs when an increase in fluid causes swelling in the wrist. The condition can lead to tingling, pain, numbness and lack of coordination in the hands.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, also found that [obese women](#) had a more than three-fold increased risk of suffering from a condition known as symphysis-pubis dysfunction, which affects the pelvic joints and may cause walking difficulties if severe.

The costs of treating minor complications in obese women were estimated to be more than three times that of treating women of a

healthy body weight.

Dr Rebecca Reynolds, of the Tommy's Centre for Maternal and Fetal Health at the University of Edinburgh: "Although symptoms such as heartburn are common and generally perceived to be benign, they can still have a major impact on the quality of life for pregnant women and can be linked to more serious conditions. What may be termed as minor complications can make a pregnancy much more uncomfortable and are also associated with higher treatment costs."

Around a quarter of [pregnant women giving birth](#) are obese. The Tommy's Centre for Maternal and Fetal Health at the University of Edinburgh is investigating the implications of obesity in pregnancy and how this can be addressed to improve both the health of mother and child.

Obesity during pregnancy also increases the risk of more serious conditions such as gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia and the need for a caesarean section. More than one-third of pregnancy-related deaths occur in mothers who are obese.

Source: University of Edinburgh

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