

# Pregnant women at risk of Vitamin D deficiency

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Pregnant women with low levels of vitamin D are more likely to develop gestational diabetes, and, their babies are more prone to bone weakness, according to a study and editorial published in the latest issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

An editorial written by Professor Peter Ebeling of the University of Melbourne and Western Health, identifies pregnant women as a high risk group for getting vitamin D deficiency in [pregnancy](#) and other related diseases such as gestational [diabetes](#), putting both mother and baby at risk.

“Evidence has accumulated linking vitamin D deficiency to adverse outcomes in pregnancy, such as preeclampsia, hypertension, higher rates of caesarean section and pre-term delivery,” he said.

He said gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), is increasingly becoming more common, affecting up to 10% of pregnancies.

“Current evidence strongly supports routine screening for vitamin D deficiency early in pregnancy,” he said.

“Furthermore, vitamin D supplementation to correct deficiency should be initiated early in pregnancy to help strengthen bones in babies and because it might reduce the incidence or severity of GDM.

“The lack of consistent testing of blood levels during pregnancy shows

that only some women are being checked for Vitamin D deficiency.”

He suggested scheduling of lower-cost, higher-dose vitamin D supplements be altered so that more women could afford them.

“Those pregnant and breastfeeding women that are most at risk of [vitamin D deficiency](#) are often the least likely to be able to afford supplements,” Professor Ebeling said.

His comments supported the study published in the journal revealing more than 40 per cent of 147 [pregnant women](#) tested at Westmead Hospital were found to have inadequate vitamin D levels.

“The 41 per cent prevalence of inadequate 25(OH)D (25-hydroxyvitamin D) levels in women with GDM (gestational diabetes mellitus) in our study is unacceptable and identifies vitamin D insufficiency as an issue of public health significance,” Westmead endocrinologist Dr. Jenny Gunton said.

Both researchers recommended that further research into the potential link between [vitamin D](#) status and gestational diabetes be conducted.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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