

High pregnancy weight gain can lead to long-term obesity

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(Medical Xpress) -- Gaining more than the recommended weight during pregnancy can put women at increased risk of becoming obese and developing related health problems, including high blood pressure, later in life.

These are the latest findings from researchers at the Avon [Longitudinal Study](#) of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)/Children of the 90s at the University of Bristol.

Weight gain during [pregnancy](#) is necessary for the growth and development of the fetus but the study, which looked at the health of 3,877 women 16 years after they gave birth, found that those who gained more than the recommended weight during pregnancy (by 2009 Institute of Medicine guidelines) were three times as likely to be [overweight](#) or

obese or to develop central adiposity (become apple shaped). Correspondingly, women whose weight gain during pregnancy was low were at lower risk of becoming overweight or obese and developing associated health problems.

Women who were underweight or within the normal range before pregnancy had average weight gains of 12.7 and 12.9 kilos respectively, well within the respective recommended ranges of 12.5-18 and 11.5-16.0 kilos, but women who were overweight gained on average 11.9 kilos, and [obese women](#) gained 10.1 kilos, both well over the recommended 7-11.5 and 5-9 kilos, respectively.

The study compared the women's pre-pregnancy weight with body mass index (BMI), waist circumference and blood pressure 16 years' later and adjusted for age, sex of the child, social class, parity, smoking, physical activity and diet in pregnancy, method of delivery, and whether the mother breastfed.

Dr Abigail Fraser, the report's main author, said: "Our findings suggest that regular monitoring of weight in pregnancy may need to be reconsidered because it provides a window of opportunity to prevent [health problems](#) later in life."

The full results and accompanying editorial are published in the June 2011 issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

More information:

Paper: Fraser A, Tilling K, Macdonald-Wallis C, Hughes R, Sattar N, Nelson SM, Lawlor D. 'Associations of gestational weight gain with maternal body mass index. Waist circumference, and blood pressure measured 16 years after pregnancy': the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2011; 93:1285-92. www.ajcn.org/

Editorial: Rasmussen KM, Abrams B. 'Gestational weight gain and later maternal health: are they related?' American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2011; 93:1186-7.

Provided by University of Bristol

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