

Older mums putting health at risk

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Delayed childbearing for an increasing number of women is putting them at higher risk of serious illness and complications, a new study has found.

A study of Victorian women, published in *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* also observed complications associated with older women [giving birth](#) placed greater demand on [health care services](#).

Led by Dr. Mary Anne Biro, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Monash University, researchers examined the link between older [maternal age](#), of women 35 years and older, and selected morbidities and complications, using data on all births over 20 weeks' gestation for 2005-06 from the

Victorian Perinatal Data Collection.

Older childbearing women were found to be at higher risk of gestational diabetes, placenta praevia, pre-eclampsia, perineal injury, haemorrhage, caesarean deliveries and multiple births.

As proportions of older women giving birth increase, Dr. Biro said child bearing at the age of 35 years and older continues to be associated with poorer outcomes and some complications are twice as likely.

“The study was the first to examine and report on the age-risk association for a range of obstetric morbidities for women giving birth in Victoria,” Dr. Biro said.

“The ideal age to have a baby is earlier than your late 30s, and we do want women and their doctors to know the risks.

“The findings have implications for childbearing women, maternity clinicians and health services.”

Impacts attributed to complicated deliveries included disruption to families, medical costs, rates of hospitalisation and surgery.

It comes as the proportion of [older women](#) giving birth increased from 7.5 per cent in 1985 to 26.4 per cent in 2008.

In Victoria during 2005-06, 133, 359 [women](#) gave [birth](#), of whom 24 per cent were aged 35 years or older.

Provided by Monash University

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