

Preventing obesity transmission during pregnancy

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A much neglected part of the obesity epidemic is that it has resulted in more overweight/obese women before and during pregnancy. Their offspring also tend to have higher birth weights and more body fat, and carry an increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases later in life. However, the nutritional factors and mechanisms involved pre and during pregnancy that may influence child obesity remain uncertain. A recent publication by ILSI Europe identifies and discusses key contributing factors leading to obesity.

In an article recently published in *Annals of [Nutrition and Metabolism](#)*, potential key contributors to obesity, including nutrition, during and after pregnancy were identified. Prenatal factors may include [maternal diet](#), gestational weight gain and metabolic perturbations during pregnancy. Postnatal diet and feeding practices along with activity patterns and family lifestyle may also modify or determine the long-term health risks.

A majority of clinical studies have examined maternal dietary information in isolation. Combining the large number of current maternal and infant studies and including analysis of both sets of nutritional data would be a great step forward. The publication indicates that "this introduces the challenge of how to unify the findings made, as each study varies considerably in the breadth and depth of dietary data collected".

In addition, with regard to gestational weight gain, Prof Michael

Symonds, University of Nottingham, UK highlighted that it "should not be used on its own but in a larger context. It should be complemented by measures of [body composition](#), metabolic and endocrine responses in the mother and offspring". Better knowledge of these contributors and the mechanisms involved could result in more targeted nutritional advice to women, especially those that are obese, to improve nutrition and health status before, during or after pregnancy. It is vitally important to prevent (the development of) excess fat mass to both the mother's own, and their infant's future health.

The publication summarises the conclusions of a workshop organised by the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Europe in October 2011. This work has been commissioned by the Metabolic Imprinting Task Force of ILSI Europe.

More information: M. Symonds, et al. *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism* 2013; 62:137–145

Provided by International Life Sciences Institute

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