

# Type 2 diabetes: An unknown danger for women with gestational diabetes

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Women who've had gestational diabetes are ten times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. Credit: Ernesto Rodriguez from Pixabay

While it's an unfair reality that women who develop gestational diabetes are ten times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life, only a

third of these women realize that they're at high risk, according to new research by the University of South Australia.

Conducted in partnership with the University College Dublin, the research examined the views of 429 Australian women with a history of gestational [diabetes](#) to establish their perceived risks of developing type 2 diabetes, potential barriers to losing weight, and useful strategies for supporting a healthy weight.

Lead researcher, UniSA's Kristy Gray says understanding the risks of developing type 2 diabetes post gestational diabetes is essential as prevention is the key.

"Gestational diabetes is the fastest growing type of diabetes in Australia, affecting thousands of [pregnant women](#) each year; and globally, it affects almost one in five pregnancies," Gray says.

"Women who've had gestational diabetes are ten times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, but only a third of these women understand that they are at high risk.

"Being overweight is a common risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes, making post pregnancy weight loss important in preventing onset of this disease.

"In our study, while 75 per cent of the women surveyed understood that they were overweight, this knowledge didn't translate into a high level of perceived risk."

Co-researcher, UniSA's Associate Professor Jennifer Keogh says diabetes prevention strategies must embrace both education and lifestyle.

"Women diagnosed with gestational diabetes often have a young family,

which means any interventions need to be considered in line with small children, busy lifestyles and multiple priorities," Dr. Keogh says.

"The priority is to educate both women with gestational diabetes, and the [health professionals](#) who care for them, to ensure greater communication and boost awareness of the risk factors these women have.

"This is critical, as close to a quarter of women in this study had not been tested for type 2 diabetes following a pregnancy with [gestational diabetes](#).

"We also know that the most effective time to initiate and commit to healthy lifestyle and behavior changes is up to two years post pregnancy, so interventions are likely to be more effective during this time frame.

"Motivation to lose weight is a significant barrier to change—whether it be because of a busy family or because a lifestyle change can be hard to stick to—consistent education, strong messaging and personalized care, can instigate positive change.

"Prevention is the key; making sure [women](#)'s needs, views, and situations are considered is an essential part of the solution."

**More information:** Kristy L. Gray et al, Women's Barriers to Weight Loss, Perception of Future Diabetes Risk and Opinions of Diet Strategies Following Gestational Diabetes: An Online Survey, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph17249180](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249180)

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