

Health in adults may be determined before birth

27 May 2013



The likelihood of adults developing obesity, asthma, allergies, cardiovascular disease and many more conditions may well be determined in the womb, according to the findings of a new Report by the British Nutrition Foundation's (BNF) Task Force, chaired by Tom Sanders, Professor of Nutrition & Dietetics at King's.

The Task Force Report, 'Nutrition and Development: short- and long-term consequences for health', was launched at BNF's conference for health professionals at the Royal College of Surgeons in London this week. The Report was compiled by a panel of eminent academic experts and looks at aspects of nutrition and early life development, including the impact of a mother's health and eating habits on her baby, even before conception.

Professor Sanders said: 'Evidence suggests that poor fetal growth, especially followed by accelerated growth in infancy, may be associated with long-term adverse consequences for health. Poor fetal growth may also affect kidney development, making offspring more sensitive to the blood pressure raising effect of salt and, therefore, increasing their risk of [cardiovascular disease](#).'

The Task Force Report also looks at the causes of

[obesity](#) and concludes that the increased appetite some people have in adulthood, compared to others, may have also been programmed in the [womb](#) as a result of their mother's own diet and weight. Almost half of all women of child-bearing age in England are overweight or obese and this can be the cause of a biological cycle of maternal obesity leading to health issues for children in later life.

Sara Stanner, Science Programme Manager at BNF, said: 'There is now unequivocal evidence to show the biological link between obesity and weight related health issues in women and their children. This is a very important message in the fight against obesity. Women need to know that their weight and health, during pregnancy, and even before they conceive, plays a key part in securing a healthy long-term future for their children.'

To help women make positive changes to their [health](#), BNF has produced a handy four-week planner containing useful information and practical advice on healthy eating and physical activity. 'Healthy Life Planner for Woman' is available to download free from the BNF [website](#).

Provided by King's College London

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