

## UNHEALTHY WEIGHT AND PREGNANCY

Doctors and patients often feel uncomfortable discussing the topic of unhealthy weight gain. However, unhealthy weight increases the risk of many health conditions including hypertension and diabetes, and avoiding the subject of unhealthy weight gain misses an opportunity to possibly prevent or treat many weight related illnesses. The continued rise in obesity and related diseases is of global concern, and has prompted the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist (ACOG) to recommend that the body mass index BMI be recorded for all women at the initial prenatal visit, and that information concerning the maternal and fetal risks of a very elevated BMI in pregnancy should be provided.

The body mass index (BMI) is a measure of someone's weight in relation to their height. The BMI is equal to person's weight divided by their height. The greater a person's weight is for a given height the higher the BMI will be. The BMI is used to screen persons for weight categories that may lead to health problems.

Normal BMI (18.5 - 24.9)	
Height	weight
4' 10"	91-119
4' 11"	94-124
5' 0"	97-128
5' 1"	100-132
5' 2"	104-136
5' 3"	107-141
5' 4"	110-145
5' 5"	114-150
5' 6"	118-155
5' 7"	121-159
5' 8"	125-164
5' 9"	128-169
5' 10"	132-174
5' 11"	136-179
6' 0"	140-184
6' 1"	144-189
6' 2"	148-194
6' 3"	152-200
6' 4"	156-205

BMI	Category
= < 18.5	Underweight
= 18.5 – 24.9	Normal weight
=25-29.9	Overweight
30-34.9	Obese – Class I
35-39.9	Obese- Class II
40 and above	Obese- Class III

There is good evidence that women with a high body mass index (BMI>30) before or during pregnancy are at greater risk of complications in pregnancy including:

- Birth defects such as heart defects, neural tube defects, and other abnormalities.
- Difficulty seeing all of the baby's organs and estimating the baby's weight with ultrasound.
- Difficulty monitoring the baby's heart rate tracing with the fetal heart monitor.
- Gestational diabetes.
- Pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure with protein in the urine)
- Problems having the epidural and other anesthesia.
- Delivery by emergency cesarean section.
- Heavy bleeding after delivery.
- Increased risk of forming abnormal blood clots which may plug a vessel in the lungs and lead to death.
- Bladder and kidney infections.
- Wound infection.
- Large babies with birth weight above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Less likely to have successful vaginal birth after cesarean section.
- Increased risk of stillbirth.

The level of these risks increases as the mother's BMI increases.

In view of the above risks the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has recommended:

- Overweight women (BMI 25-29.9) should be advised to gain no more than 15-25 pounds during pregnancy and obese women (BMI= 30) no more that 15 pounds during pregnancy.
- Screening for gestational diabetes at the initial prenatal visit with repeated screening later in pregnancy if the results are negative.
- Consultation with an anesthesiologist prior to delivery.
- Use of graduated compression stockings, hydration, and early mobilization during and after cesarean delivery should be encouraged.
- Consultation with weight loss specialists before attempting another pregnancy.

Lastly, breastfeeding can help patients to lose the weight gained during pregnancy, and also has a protective effect against childhood obesity.

**I have been given a copy of this document. I have read it and all my questions have been answered.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

