New Research Finds Pregnant People with Gestational Diabetes at Increased Risk of a Wider Range of Cardiovascular Problems than Previously Thought

Study Looks at Long-Term Effects of Gestational Diabetes on Heart Health

Washington, DC — Research has shown that people who develop diabetes during pregnancy, known as gestational diabetes, are at a greater risk of developing heart problems later in life. However, less is known about the range of cardiovascular problems that can arise in middle age for those with a history of gestational diabetes.

Now, in a new study to be presented today at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine’s (SMFM) annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting™, which is being held virtually, researchers will unveil findings that suggest gestational diabetes is associated with an increased risk of more diverse cardiovascular outcomes later in life than previously thought.

Using participants in the UK Biobank, a database containing health information from an estimated 500,000 participants, researchers looked at the cardiovascular health of 219,330 women who had delivered at least one baby from 2006 to 2010. Results showed that 13,094 women (6.0 percent) developed cardiovascular problems, and women with a history of gestational diabetes were at greater risk of a variety of cardiovascular problems, and that risk increased with age.

After adjusting for confounding variables, women with a history of gestational diabetes were at an increased risk for a range of cardiovascular conditions, including coronary artery disease, heart attack, stroke, peripheral artery disease, heart failure, mitral regurgitation, and atrial fibrillation.

“We’ve known that gestational diabetes can lead to heart problems,” said one of the study’s authors, Seung Mi Lee, MD, a maternal-fetal subspecialist and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Seoul National University College of Medicine. “This research shows us the extent of heart health problems that can arise long after someone has given birth. The next step is to look at what kind of preventative measures can be taken during pregnancy to hopefully prevent cardiovascular disease from developing later in life.”

The abstract has been published in the January 2022 supplement of the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (AJOG) and can be accessed at no cost on the AJOG website. To view the presentation of this
abstract or other Pregnancy Meeting™ abstracts and events, visit the SMFM website or contact Karen Addis at karen@addispr.com or 301-787-2394.

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**About the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine**
The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), founded in 1977, is the medical professional society for obstetricians who have additional training in high-risk, complicated pregnancies. SMFM represents more than 5,000 members who care for high-risk pregnant people and provides education, promotes research, and engages in advocacy to reduce disparities and optimize the health of high-risk pregnant people and their families. SMFM and its members are dedicated to optimizing maternal and fetal outcomes and assuring medically appropriate treatment options are available to all patients. For more information, visit SMFM.org and connect with the organization on Facebook and Twitter. For the latest 2022 Annual Meeting news and updates, follow the hashtag #smfm22.