

# Piling on the pregnancy pounds does no harm to baby in the long-term

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Credit: University of Aberdeen

A study from the University of Aberdeen has found that mothers' weight gain in pregnancy is not linked to increased risk of premature death in their adult children.

The first study to look at the long-term effects of mothers' weight gain during [pregnancy](#) on the offspring, has shown that the mother's rate of weight gain was not found to be associated with adult offspring's [risk](#) of death or heart problems.

Only a very extreme rate of weight gain was associated with increased risk of cerebrovascular events in the offspring. In these cases, adult health and lifestyle factors could mitigate the risk.

Previous research has reported that children who were born to mothers who were obese or overweight in pregnancy were at greater risk of death or heart-related health problems. However until now – no study has had adequate follow up time to assess the effects on cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks, and mortality in adulthood.

The study led by Dr Sohinee Bhattacharya, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, used data from the Aberdeen Children of the 1950's Birth Cohort to follow-up children whose mothers' weight gain during pregnancy was recorded. This meant that the impact of lifestyle factors in adulthood could also be accounted for.

Dr Bhattacharya who led the study – published in *Heart*, said: "These findings are quite startling because what they show is that there is basically no relationship between mother's weight gain in pregnancy and [heart disease](#), or [premature death](#) in adulthood.

"Only in very extreme cases, where the mother had an exceptionally high weight gain, we found a higher risk of stroke in the adult offspring – however once we took the adults' lifestyle factors into account – such as BMI and smoking status, this difference disappeared.

"So - this study provides a very important public health message –you can't do very much about your mother's [weight gain](#) in pregnancy, but if

you lead a healthy life - you can mitigate any effects of this on your risk of having heart disease or dying prematurely.

"How might this impact on clinical practice? Well for the first time, this large scale cohort study was able to show that adult health and [lifestyle factors](#) and not early life [risk factors](#) played the most important role in determining cardiovascular mortality and morbidity. Modifying these risk factors (obesity, smoking, diabetes) would constitute effective preventive strategy irrespective of maternal or early life factors."

**More information:** S Bhattacharya et al. Maternal gestational weight gain and offspring's risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality, *Heart* (2016). [DOI: 10.1136/heartjnl-2015-308709](https://doi.org/10.1136/heartjnl-2015-308709)

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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