Maternity Information Leaflet

Weight Management in Pregnancy
What is BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) uses your height and your weight to give a number which shows whether your weight is healthy.

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kilograms)}}{\text{Height} \times \text{Height (metres)}}
\]

For example — a woman who weighs 10 stone (64kg) and who is 5ft 4ins tall (1.63m) would have a BMI of 24. However, a woman of the same height weighing 14 stone (90kg) would have a BMI of 34.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>WHO classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 19</td>
<td>Underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24.9</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29.9</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34.5</td>
<td>Obese I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39.9</td>
<td>Obese II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 40</td>
<td>Morbidly obese (III)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Your BMI

When you see your midwife or doctor for the first time in your pregnancy, your height and weight will be measured and your BMI calculated. This will be recorded in your maternity notes.
Being overweight can affect your pregnancy

Many pregnant women with a raised BMI have a healthy pregnancy and a straightforward normal delivery. However, women who are overweight may face particular problems during pregnancy, labour and afterwards, especially if it is a first pregnancy.

What can I do now I’m pregnant?

Having a healthy weight before you are pregnant helps with these problems. Pregnancy is not a good time to diet but it is a good time to start eating healthily.

It is up to you
- What you eat and how much your weight changes

but we can help!

Is it safe to exercise?
You should try to keep active during your pregnancy. Even walking 30 minutes a day will help. Ask you GP or midwife for advice.

The Weight Management Programme

If your BMI is 30 or above you will receive an appointment to attend the weight management programme led by 2 midwives who specialise in looking after pregnant women with a raised BMI. The programme is part of your antenatal care.

These midwives run successful groups in the Chichester and Worthing areas. The groups are designed to give you support and advice during your pregnancy to help you have a healthy pregnancy and to control your weight gain.
During the one hour session each week, you will be weighed. In addition, there are weekly themes to give you ideas on how to make lifestyle changes which will have a positive impact on you and on the health of your children.

This programme is free and is part of the care provided during your pregnancy.

**Things you should know:**

**During pregnancy**

If your BMI is 30 or above it is recommended that you take an increased dose of folic acid (5mgs) until you are 13 weeks pregnant. It is also advisable to take Vitamin D (10 micrograms) throughout the pregnancy.

All ladies have their urine tested regularly for protein and diabetes throughout pregnancy. At each antenatal visit, your midwife or doctor will also check your blood pressure.

If your BMI is 30 or above, you will be offered a specialised fasting test for diabetes at booking and at 28 weeks.

If your BMI is 35 or above at your first visit, you will be advised to book your delivery in hospital and your antenatal care will be led by an obstetrician and your midwife. You may be offered more ultrasound scans to check the growth and position of your baby.

If your BMI is 40 or above at your first visit, your midwife or obstetrician will also refer you to an anaesthetist during your pregnancy. They will discuss ways of providing safe and effective pain relief in labour (including epidurals). Having a raised BMI can make anaesthetics and epidurals more challenging.
Having a raised BMI increases the likelihood of certain complications, including diabetes, high blood pressure (and pre-eclampsia), blood clots in your legs / lungs, large / small baby and stillbirth.

**Possible labour complications**

During your labour it is important that we are able to ensure your baby is well. With a raised BMI it can sometimes be difficult to listen to the baby’s heart rate and your obstetrician or midwife may want to monitor the baby by placing a small clip on the baby’s head (this is not painful for the baby). For the same reason, use of the birthing pool is not recommended.

You may also be given some tablets to decrease the amount of acid in your stomach and advice on what you should or should not eat. Isotonic sports drinks may be recommended if you are advised not to eat.

Having a raised BMI also increases the risk of prolonged labour, ventouse or forceps delivery and caesarean section.

The risk of a higher than normal blood loss is also increased therefore it is recommended that you are given a drug to help with delivery of your placenta.

Please be aware that it is important to keep as mobile as possible in labour to help prevent skin damage / pressure sores.

Your midwife can provide further information on any of these topics, please feel free to ask.
Pain relief for your labour

Many women with a raised BMI are likely to have a straightforward delivery. However women with a raised BMI are more likely to need help with delivery. You may need an anaesthetic to help deliver your baby. We would prefer you to be awake if you require a Caesarean as a general anaesthetic poses more risks. If you did not see an anaesthetist during your pregnancy, this can be arranged when you are on the labour ward to answer any questions you may have.

If your BMI is over 40, you will have already seen an anaesthetist during your pregnancy. He / she will have discussed with you the benefits of having an epidural in early labour.

An epidural can provide excellent pain relief during your labour if you need any assistance with delivery. However, all other methods of pain relief are available to you but we would advise you not to use the birthing pool for labour or delivery. All these options can be discussed with your midwife or doctor.

After your delivery

Some women will need to have blood thinning injections after birth to help prevent blood clots in the legs or lungs. If the injections need to continue after you have gone home we will show you how to do this.

You will also be encouraged to get up and be active as soon as possible.

Women with a raised BMI are more prone to infections after giving
If you require extra assistance with breastfeeding, please ask for help and support.

**For the future...**

After the birth of your baby, you should be encouraged to return to your pre-pregnancy weight, or lower, as this will have significant health benefits for you. If this does not happen, it is likely that your weight will increase with each pregnancy therefore increasing the associated risks with subsequent pregnancies and throughout life.

You are invited to attend the weight management programme for 12 weeks following your delivery.

*If you have any questions, please ask your midwife, GP, obstetrician or anaesthetist*
Further Information

NHS Choices Website — www.nhs.uk
National Institute for Clinical Excellence — www.nice.org.uk

Contact details:

St Richard’s Hospital, Spitalfield Lane, Chichester,
West Sussex, PO19 6SE

Labour ward: 01243 831433
Antenatal Clinic: 01243 788122 ext. 32871

Worthing Hospital, Lyndhurst Road, Worthing
West Sussex, BN11 2DH

Labour Ward: 01903 285138
Antenatal Clinic: 01903 205111 ext. 84371

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