

DURING pregnancy, many factors contribute to the baby's well-being. Dr Haw Wan Lye, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Columbia Asia Hospital – Cheras, shares his concerns about the increasing body mass indices (BMIs) in the population, especially that of pregnant women.

"If a woman with a high BMI experiences high weight gain during pregnancy, her risk of developing gestational diabetes will be increased," says Dr Haw.

"Therefore, if your BMI is already high, you must be careful of your calorie intake. The guidelines for weight gain during pregnancy state that a 12kg to 15kg weight gain is adequate for a mother who is underweight or of normal weight, while an 8kg to 10kg weight gain would be appropriate for a pregnant woman whose BMI is above 23."

Dr Haw advises that there is a need for expecting mothers to monitor their diets and pay attention to the glycaemic index values of different foods to ensure that their babies receive adequate

# Your weight matters

nutrition and reduce their risk of developing gestational diabetes.

"A diet plan is divided into three categories – carbohydrates, protein and fat. If one's BMI is high, her carbohydrate intake should be decreased to control her blood sugar level and weight gain," says Dr Haw.

He recommends that pregnant women undergo a modified glucose tolerance test to check for their risks of developing gestational diabetes, so doctors can advise them on their diet plans accordingly.

He also states that a balanced diet is essential to a baby's growth. Subsequently, he discourages pregnant women from relying too much on alternative medicine as certain supplements can cause more harm than good to them and their babies.

He says, "It is strongly advised

that you take alternative medicine sparingly as there is no scientific evidence that proves their actual benefits."

"Intake of fresh fruits and vegetables is encouraged. Supplements such as multivitamins, calcium and docosahexaenoic acid can be taken according to your doctor's discretion."

Dr Haw insists that it is important for pregnant women to undergo regular health check-ups, including HbA1c tests to monitor their blood sugar levels over a period. Regular exercise such as prenatal yoga, swimming, jogging and walking are encouraged, especially in the second trimester.

"It is better for women to optimise their weight before they get pregnant. However, if a woman with a high BMI gets pregnant, she should seek dietary advice from a doctor or dietician," he advises.

Women with a high risk of developing gestational diabetes must get tested. Those with a history of having bigger babies or a high amniotic fluid index need to be careful to prevent premature labour.

If a woman is underweight and it is affecting the growth of the baby, it is necessary for her to increase her protein intake.

■ For more information, call 03-9086 9999.



Dr Haw Wan Lye.



Weight gain during pregnancy will affect the health of the baby.

## Finding a balance

According to Dr Haw Wan Lye, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Columbia Asia Hospital – Cheras, going through a pregnancy with the

appropriate weight gain is crucial because putting on too much or too little weight can cause complications.

Below is a list of complications

that mother and baby can face because of the mother's excessive or inadequate weight gain during pregnancy.

	Excess weight gain in mother	Inadequate weight gain in mother
Mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivery complications</li> <li>- Increased risk of infections</li> <li>- Increased likelihood of operative delivery</li> <li>- Increased risk of preterm labour</li> <li>- Trauma from severe tearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased risk of preterm labour</li> </ul>
Baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obese baby</li> <li>- Hypoglycaemic immediately after birth</li> <li>- Respiratory problems</li> <li>- Slower maturity of cells</li> <li>- Increased risk of developing diabetes later in life if mother is diabetic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affected growth</li> <li>- Smaller than normal for gestational age</li> <li>- Hypoglycaemic immediately after birth</li> <li>- Hypothermic immediately after birth</li> <li>- Problems with cardiovascular system</li> </ul>