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Media Statement

PREGNANT MUMS URGED TO HELP AVOID GESTATIONAL DIABETES

WA's peak diabetes funding group says important new research underscores how women can reduce their risk of diabetes during and after pregnancy, no matter what their weight is.

Diabetes Research WA executive director Sheri Westlund said it was key that women wanting to become mothers understood the advances in research into gestational diabetes and its impacts.

"A study out of China¹ and a metaanalysis from Norway² recently revealed that overweight and obese women who did supervised exercise for an hour three times a week during pregnancy were less likely to develop gestational diabetes than those who continued their usual activities, even if they did not lose weight," said Ms Westlund.

"Exercise during pregnancy has also been associated with a lower risk of hypertension during pregnancy.³

"These findings suggest it's never too late to reduce your risk of being diagnosed with pregnancy-related diabetes and to boost your health."

Recent research⁴ had also discovered that in women who had had gestational diabetes, breastfeeding for more than three months protected them against type 2 diabetes for up to 15 years after they gave birth as it led to long-term metabolic changes.

"On average, research shows women with gestational diabetes are less likely to breastfeed their child, possibly due to having less milk supply, but hopefully this knowledge can help put the focus on ways to help turn that situation around," said Ms Westlund.

"It's hugely important to look at strategies such as this because women who've developed pregnancy-related diabetes are several fold more likely to develop type 2 diabetes within five years after having their babies."

Gestational diabetes is becoming more common, affecting up to 10 percent of pregnant Australian women.

Ms Westlund said for women who were able to, bringing their body mass index (BMI) into a healthy range before falling pregnant, was also recommended, with even a small weight reduction proving beneficial.

"Queensland researchers⁵ recently found that following a Mediterranean diet high in vegetables, legumes, fruit, nuts, fish, and wholegrain cereal and pasta could help women reach a healthy BMI, and reduce their risk of hypertension in pregnancy" she said.

"Even with all this research progress, it's still critical we uncover new ways to help bring down rates of gestational diabetes because the health impact is huge not just on the mother but also their babies who we know are more prone to issues such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in later life," she said.

To help Diabetes Research WA fund more ground-breaking research or sign up to their Be Extraordinary Regular Giving campaign head to www.diabetesresearchwa.com.au or call (08) 9224 1006.

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1 *Wang et al., Diabetes Care, 2016

2 *http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-07/nuos-ecg070516.php

3 Barakat et al., AJOG, 2016

4 <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/868838>

5 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/07/160720094444.htm>

6 <https://public-health.uq.edu.au/article/2016/07/women-planning-pregnancy-urged-consider-bmi>

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