

Obesity and Maternal Health

Introduction

The prevalence of obesity in the U.S. has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. Today, nearly one-third of adult women are obese.

The Issue

Obesity is associated with increased morbidity, including type-2 diabetes, hypertension, infertility, heart disease, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, and a variety of cancers, including breast, uterine, and colon.

Obese women are at increased risk for adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes including preeclampsia, prematurity, gestational diabetes, and necessary surgical procedures. Obesity during pregnancy has been associated with cesarean delivery for failure to progress.

Costly Issue

Obesity in the U.S. costs \$147 billion a year in direct medical costs, over 9% of all medical spending. In fact, obese individuals spend nearly \$1,500 a year more on health care, 41% more than non-obese individuals.

What Is Needed

The federal government can help address obesity through targeted research investments, public awareness campaigns, and programs to prioritize this public health challenge.

Research is needed to determine the biological, environmental, and behavioral components of obesity, and the effects of obesity on both the mother and the fetus. Targeted prevention research is needed to develop effective long-term prevention strategies.

Research should focus on:

- The impact of obesity on maternal death
- The impact of obesity on fetal/infant health outcomes
- Linkages between obesity and prematurity
- Weight loss/nutrition during pregnancy

What Must Congress Do?

Congress can help improve maternal and infant health outcomes by funding obesity-related research and programs. Congress can:

- Appropriate funding for obesity research.
- Reintroduce, cosponsor, and reauthorize the PREEMIE Act.
- Reintroduce, cosponsor, and pass the Birth Defects Prevention, Risk Reduction, and Awareness Act.
- Reintroduce, cosponsor, and pass the Stillbirth & SUID Prevention, Education, and Awareness Act.

