[IMAGE]

Weight Loss for the Little One

People who realize they are overweight often struggle to begin or maintain a weight-loss program; frequently, a sense of futility can emerge when the realization hits that losing weight is not a fun or easy thing to do. As a result, some of these individuals give up and become content with their weight. A recent study in *Pediatrics* shows that women attempting to have a child may not have this option.

A team at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta looked at risks for several major birth defects based on nearly 1,000 area pregnancies between 1993 and 1997, over 600 of which were selected because of a known birth defect. The body mass index (BMI) of each mother, a measure used to determine if a person is overweight or obese, was calculated to determine birth-risk differences between obese and normal-weight mothers.

Women considered obese when they became pregnant were more than three times more likely to have a baby with spina bifida (a defect involving incomplete development of the vertebrae and exposure of the spine) or an abdominal deformity called an omphalocele than healthy-weight mothers. Both obese mothers and even mothers only considered overweight were twice as likely to have an infant with heart defects or multiple, unrelated birth defects.

Abnormal metabolic processes or undiagnosed diabetes common in obese women may be responsible for the development of birth defects in a fetus. If you are considering having a child, but are overweight, try to get down to a healthy weight before conceiving. Not only will you benefit physically and emotionally - so will your unborn child.

Reference:

Watkins ML, Rasmussen SA, et al. Maternal obesity and risk for birth defects. Pediatrics *2003:111(5), pp. 1152-1158.*

For more tips on staying healthy during pregnancy, check out www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/women/pregnancy/index.html.

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