

Thursday 13 March 2014

## Tapping into free resources key as more women develop gestational diabetes

Last year over 22,215 women in Australia developed gestational diabetes, a 13 per cent increase on 2012 levels. With the rising incidence of the condition annually, the free National Gestational Diabetes Register helps women who have had gestational diabetes to manage their health into the future.

While maternal blood glucose levels usually return to normal after birth, many mothers develop type 2 diabetes within the following 10 years.

Brunswick communications professional Alex Merory was 32 when she was pregnant with her first child and faced the diagnosis of gestational diabetes. She said that even though she had a family history of diabetes, she was really surprised. "It was quite shocking. I always thought of myself as a healthy person," she said.

Alex needed insulin therapy to ensure a safe pregnancy. "It was really hard because I was trying hard to stay off insulin but eventually there was nothing I could do. The main issue was 'is the baby going to be OK?' and it changed my experience of pregnancy."

Women with gestational diabetes in the 30–39 year-old age bracket almost double the incidences of women in the 16–20, 21–29 and 40–59 year-old age brackets combined.

The risk of getting gestational diabetes is lessened by maintaining a healthy lifestyle prior to pregnancy. This includes weight control, eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

Working closely with her diabetes team, Alex said she strictly followed her management plan and her own research, sticking to a low GI diet and an hour of exercise every day after dinner. "One thing I learned is that it [gestational diabetes] happens to a lot of people and that information is really important. We all know that health is a long game, but it's about what you do every day," she said.

If diabetes is not well managed (i.e. blood glucose levels remain high), it may cause problems such as a large baby, which can create the risk of injury at delivery and a need for the baby to be monitored in special care until the glucose level stabilises. Other complications may include premature delivery and miscarriage.

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that develops during pregnancy and usually does not continue after the birth of the child.

Mothers who experience gestational diabetes are recommended to check for type 2 diabetes every year, before planning a pregnancy and if you're feeling unwell. For more information on the National Gestational Diabetes Register visit [ndss.com.au/en/GD](http://ndss.com.au/en/GD)

*Diabetes Australia – Vic is the leading charity and peak consumer body working to reduce the impact of diabetes.*

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