

## **Weight in Pregnancy: Why does it matter?**



### **Overview**

Many studies show us that having a high or low Body Mass Index (BMI) in pregnancy increases the risk of certain complications. The BMI is a calculation used in medicine that compares your weight to your height. It is not a perfect tool and on its own cannot tell us how healthy you are. Unfortunately it seems to be the best available tool we have, and so we use it to estimate the risk of some complications that can happen during pregnancy and labour and delivery.

Our goal in Golden is to support you to be your healthiest before, during, and after your pregnancy, and reduce the risks of complications for you and your baby. Healthy for us means feeling well, being able to do the things you want to do, and having a good relationship with nutrition and physical activity. We also want you to have the knowledge to make the best decisions for you and your baby about your healthcare during your pregnancy.

### **Background**

Golden and District Hospital is considered a Level 1 Community Hospital, which means we have the staff and equipment to look after low risk pregnant people.

Anesthetic services are provided by Family Physicians trained in Anesthesia (FP-A). FP-As are trained to provide anesthetics (epidurals, spinals and general anesthesia - putting you to sleep) for patients at low risk of complications. Surgery services (c-sections) are provided by Family Physicians trained in Obstetrics (OSS) and a general surgeon as well. There is no Obstetrician/Gynecologist or pediatrician available in Golden, and our nearest referral center is Cranbrook.

Having an elevated BMI increases the risk of having a big baby, of having an emergency c-section, and of having complications during your c-section. There is also a slightly increased risk of stillbirth for women with high BMIs. Our current Canadian guidelines recommend that these people have their babies in a facility with obstetricians and specialist anesthesiologists for these reasons. As physicians and midwives in Golden, it is our responsibility to refer any higher risk patients to a higher level of care for their labour and deliveries.

### **The specifics**

We'd like to hear about your relationship with your weight and with food in the past. Many people, regardless of how much they weigh, have struggled with dieting and eating disorders in the past. We do not want you to diet during your pregnancy, but to listen to your body and feed it good food and move your body regularly (30 minutes of physical activity five days per week, for everyone). This has been shown to help support healthy weight gain during pregnancy.

If your BMI is less than 18.5 or more than 35, your care provider will talk to you about some extra monitoring and tests that we recommend during your pregnancy. All patients will be offered a referral to a local dietician to discuss nutrition goals in pregnancy.

If your pre-pregnancy BMI is 38 or greater, or your BMI at any stage in your pregnancy is over 40, we will talk to you about your individual risks and we will recommend that we refer you to the East Kootenay Regional Hospital in Cranbrook to have your baby there, discuss your plan with you.

Because of the small increased risk of stillbirth with elevated BMI, we recommend that women consider induction of labour one week before your due date if your BMI is over 40. If your BMI is between 30 and 40, we will talk to you about the option of induction of labour in the week before your due date.