

Mothers' obesity following childbirth linked to socio-economic status

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(Medical Xpress)—Women who are socio-economically disadvantaged are 42% more likely than those in the highest income group to be obese following childbirth, according to new study findings published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*.

Researchers from University College Dublin (UCD) and the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) who conducted the study found that obesity after [childbirth](#) is associated with lower household income, smoking, lower breastfeeding duration, and earlier completion of full-time education.

The results should have implications for the way in which the state and

civil society deliver and communicate public health campaigns related to maternal and post-partum health.

More than 10,000 mothers living in Ireland took part in the study which forms part of the national Growing Up in Ireland project.

"The study shows that public health interventions related to obesity in women with children should be tailored and targeted towards high-risk groups; particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged," said Professor Michael Turner, UCD Centre for Human Reproduction (based at Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital), and the UCD School of Medicine and Medical Science, University College Dublin, who led the study.

"The experience of postpartum obesity varies considerably in accordance with socio-economic status. For instance, while the study shows that increased parity (the number of times a women gives birth) amongst poorer women is associated with greater levels of obesity, we found no such association amongst more affluent women," he said.

"Becoming a parent can bring with it lifestyle changes that can have serious implications for weight gain, the risk of gestational diabetes in future pregnancies and chronic disease," said Professor Richard Layte, economic sociologist at the Economic & Social Research Institute, who co-authored the study.

"Pregnancy can be a turning point in lifetime health risks and this research shows that such risks are more concentrated among lower income women."

"[The research shows that] health care professionals need to invest more time and effort with lower income couples who are at a greater risk of gaining weight."

The study focused on a representative sample of 10,524 mothers, selected from the national Child Benefit Register, maintained by the Department of Social Protection, all of whom gave birth between December 2007 and May 2008.

The group of mothers was sampled nine months after delivery, as part of the national Growing Up in Ireland Study Infant Cohort. The sample is wide-ranging and equivalent to approximately one-sixth of the total number of deliveries in Ireland each year.

Provided by University College Dublin

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