

New study aims to improve the outcomes of pregnancy for women with diabetes

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Researchers at Newcastle University are to look at ways of reducing the risk of congenital anomalies developing in babies born to women with diabetes.

Dr Ruth Bell at Newcastle University and her team of researchers have been awarded a grant by charity [Diabetes](#) UK to collate information from unique registers of congenital anomaly and pregnancies in [women](#) with diabetes in the North of England. It is hoped Dr Bell's team will be able to calculate the risk of common problems and identify what factors increase the risk of congenital anomalies arising in order to best advise and support women with diabetes before and throughout their [pregnancy](#).

Women with the condition are five times more likely to have a stillborn baby compared to other women. Their babies are also more likely to be affected by other congenital anomalies, including spina bifida, heart and kidney anomalies.

Some types of congenital anomalies can also lead to death of the infant or serious long-term health problems, which sometimes require major surgery. It is well established that good blood glucose control before and during pregnancy can reduce this risk, but little is known about what other preventative measures women can take.

Dr Bell said: "Pregnancy poses a risk for all women, however there is an increased risk for women with diabetes as having a pregnancy affected

by a congenital anomaly is twice as likely to occur. It's important that current research is compiled and used to help further our knowledge in this field and, following on from this, we hope our study will also be able to help inform future intervention studies aimed at improving the outcomes of pregnancy for women with diabetes."

Dr Iain Frame, Director of Research at Diabetes UK said: "Having diabetes doesn't mean your baby will automatically develop a congenital anomaly as tight blood glucose control can greatly reduce this risk. However, with one in 250 pregnancies occurring in women with diabetes, diabetes is the most common pre-existing condition cared for during pregnancy and therefore a vital area of research that needs to be focused on to ensure these women are provided with the best care and support they need.

"Many of the risks women and their babies face can be reduced if they receive the appropriate preconception care and are supported to achieve good [blood glucose](#) control during their pregnancy. This is why Dr Bell's work at Newcastle University could have such a positive impact."

Provided by Newcastle University

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