

A prenatal trigger for postnatal obesity

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During pregnancy, the health of the mother and the intrauterine environment can have dramatic and lasting effects on the child. Intrahepatic cholestasis of pregnancy (ICP) is a liver disease that affects 0.5-2% of pregnant women and is characterized by increased bile acid levels in the maternal serum.

In this issue of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, Catherine Williamson and colleagues at Imperial College London studied the long term impact of ICP in a cohort of Finnish families.

They found that as teenagers, individuals born to women with ICP had altered metabolic profiles and increased BMI. To further understand this effect, Williams and colleagues developed a mouse model of ICP and found that offspring of ICP mothers were more susceptible to metabolic disease and diet-induced obesity.

In the companion commentary, Susan Murphy of Duke University points out that the mouse model of ICP may also be useful in identifying other factors that predispose individuals to metabolic syndrome.

More information: Cholestatic pregnancy programmes metabolic disease in the offspring, *J Clin Invest.* 2013;123(7):3172–3181.

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