

Pregnancy and Diabetes Mellitus



Sunday, June 27, 2010 - One of the pressing issues faced by pregnant women today is the threat of diabetes mellitus affecting their unborn child according to Dr. Sunil Fernando, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist.

Speaking to *The Sunday Leader*, Dr. Fernando who is attached to the Ragama Teaching Hospital, who counts over a decade of experience in this field, stated that diabetes, a disease in which your blood glucose, or sugar, levels are too high, is especially dangerous to pregnant women as it poses a threat to unborn babies.

Dr. Fernando explained that obese women, diabetic women and even women clear of diabetes and who have a clean bill of health are all at risk (as gestational diabetes, a diabetes that happens for the first time when a woman is pregnant is also fairly common in Sri Lanka), and while gestational diabetes for the most part disappears after a woman has a baby, it does increase their risk for having diabetes later in life.

Dr. Fernando stated that the best way to combat either type of diabetes or ward it off is in avoiding obesity at all costs, following a meal plan, exercising, regular tests on blood sugar levels and in taking medication. Obesity in pregnancy poses many complications, including difficulty in assessing the baby's growth and development during the pregnancy and can result in a 'large' baby that could cause difficulties in delivery. However, other precautions, such as testing before pregnancy, in particular the HbA1c test which should ideally be below 6.5%- 7% to keep a woman in the clear, is recommended for women already affected with diabetes. He also advised that regular checkups and screenings are a must and should start from the 3rd week of pregnancy. The baby's age should ideally be checked between the 8th and 10th week of pregnancy

and abnormality scans can begin from the 12th week, growth scans from the 28th week and the rest routine. Once diagnosed as having diabetes, blood sugar levels should be regularly checked along with other tests that detect Polycystic Ovarian Disease which roughly 7% of Sri Lankan women suffer from, especially those who are obese, have dark skin patches or irregular, infrequent bleeding.

It's these tests and regular checkups that ensure a smooth pregnancy with minimal hiccups and Hemas Hospital, Wattala pays special attention to improving gynecological and pregnancy services, especially when it comes to diabetic mothers and those that are at risk of developing diabetes during pregnancy. Advanced ultrasound and other blood tests are all available at the Hemas Hospital, Wattala.