

# Alaska Obesity Facts: Maternal Weight Gain

## WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT PRE-PREGNANCY OBESITY?

- Obese women are more likely to have infants with multiple abnormalities including neural tube and heart defects, than women at a healthy body mass index (BMI).<sup>1</sup>
- Overweight and obese women are more likely than those of healthy weight to have children at greater risk for developing obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Obese women have an increased risk of pregnancy-related complications, including pregnancy-induced high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, postpartum infections, and blood clots.<sup>3,4</sup>

## WHY BE CONCERNED WITH EXCESS WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY?

- Women who gain weight over the recommended amount during pregnancy tend to have newborns with a higher birth weight than normal, a condition referred to as large for gestational age (LGA). Infants born to women who gain excessive weight during pregnancy tend to have a high amount of body fat, regardless of birth weight.<sup>2,5,6</sup>
- LGA babies are at increased risk for being born with birth defects and developing complications at birth, e.g., hypoglycemia, shoulder dystocia, and respiratory distress, and for being overweight or obese as they get older.<sup>7,8</sup>
- Babies born with a high amount of body fat, regardless of birth weight, are at possible risk for childhood obesity.<sup>5</sup>
- Women who gain excess weight during pregnancy are at risk for having prolonged vaginal delivery times, perineal tears, and cesarean section deliveries.<sup>2,9</sup>

## IOM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOTAL WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY, BY PRE-PREGNANCY BMI\*<sup>9</sup>

Pre-pregnancy BMI Category	Women pregnant with one baby	Women pregnant with twins
Underweight: <18.5	Gain 28-40 pounds	Not available
Healthy weight: 18.5-24.9	Gain 25-35 pounds	Gain 37-54 pounds
Overweight: 25-29.9	Gain 15-25 pounds	Gain 31-50 pounds
Obese: ≥30	Gain 11-20 pounds	Gain 25-42 pounds

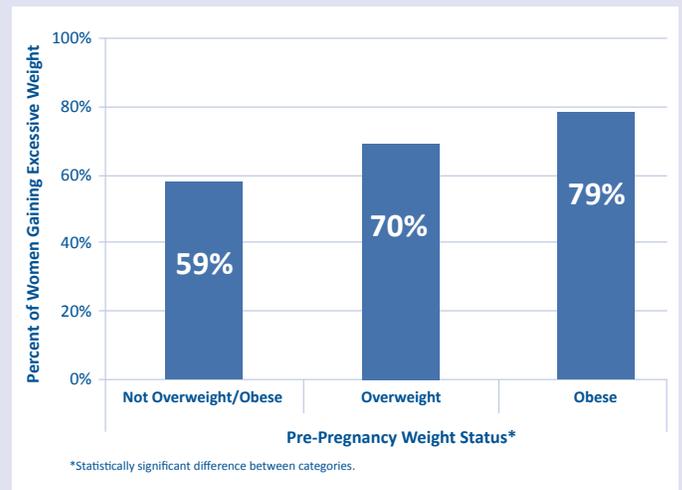
\*BMI=(Weight in kg/(Height in Meters)<sup>2</sup>). Or, go to: [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult\\_bmi/english\\_bmi\\_calculator/bmi\\_calculator.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html)

## PREGNANCY AND WEIGHT STATUS IN ALASKA

Almost half of women in Alaska start their pregnancy at an unhealthy weight and gain too much weight during pregnancy. Although a majority of women report their healthcare provider talking to them about healthy weight gain during pregnancy, two-thirds gained too much weight during pregnancy.

- 47% of mothers were overweight/obese (BMI ≥25) prior to pregnancy.<sup>10</sup>
- 66% of women gained too much weight during pregnancy.<sup>10</sup>
- Obese women were the most likely to gain too much weight during pregnancy (79%) in comparison to overweight women (70%) and normal weight women (59%). (Figure 1)<sup>10</sup>

FIGURE 1. PERCENT OF WOMEN GAINING EXCESSIVE WEIGHT DURING PREGNANCY BY PRE-PREGNANCY WEIGHT STATUS, ALASKA 2009-2010.<sup>10</sup>



SOURCE: ALASKA PRAMS, 2009-2010

- Although 75% of obese women reported that a healthcare worker talked to them about how much weight they should gain during pregnancy, obese women were less likely to report having this conversation than overweight or normal weight women and likely to gain too much weight.<sup>10</sup>
- Less than 50% of women reported having a discussion with a healthcare worker after delivery about getting to or staying at a healthy weight.<sup>10</sup>

# Alaska Obesity Facts: Strategies to Reduce Maternal Weight Gain

## What Can Health Care Providers Do?

- Help their patients develop a plan for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight prior to becoming pregnant.
- Discuss appropriate weight gain during pregnancy.
- Encourage patients to achieve a healthy weight after pregnancy through physical activity, healthy nutrition and breastfeeding.

## WEIGHT GAIN RECOMMENDATIONS DURING PREGNANCY

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendations for weight gain during pregnancy consider both infant and maternal health. The recommendations are based on a woman's pre-pregnancy BMI and differ if the mother is pregnant with one child or twins. The best health outcomes for both mother and child are achieved when women start their pregnancy at a healthy weight and gain the recommended amount of weight during pregnancy.<sup>9</sup>

## What Can Alaska Schools, Worksites and Communities Do?

- **Schools:** Provide health education that addresses healthy weight management. Implement policies supporting healthy food and increased physical activity.
- **Worksites:** Offer programs for employees that improve diet and opportunities for physical activity. Since breastfeeding is associated with improved health outcomes for mothers and reduces the risk of childhood obesity, make places available for women who breastfeed to pump and store their milk.
- **Communities:** Provide healthy environments that encourage healthy eating and active living for all women in their childbearing years.

## What Can Women Do?

- Maintain a healthy weight prior to becoming pregnant by being physically active and making healthy food choices.
- Gain the recommended amount of weight during pregnancy.
- Engage in 30 minutes or more of moderate activity daily during pregnancy with your health care provider's approval.<sup>12</sup>
- Consider a food diary as a method of tracking your calories and food choices.

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