



26 Aug 2020
 Author: ALANAH FROST
 Article type: Publication
 Page: 17
 Herald Sun, The
 Readership: 1058000
 AVE: \$9599.78
 Circulation: 330766

This copy is licensed by Copyright Agency for the purposes of a Press Clipping Service. Any reuse of this article must be licensed: www.rightsportal.com.au

Diabetes a rising threat for mothers

Call to limit risks

ALANAH FROST

HALF a million Australian women could develop gestational diabetes in the next decade, according to new predictions.

This means mums and hubs will be at greater risk of complications during pregnancy and developing diabetes post-birth.

In the past 10 years, the number of women diagnosed doubled, with more than 41,000 cases across the country in the past year alone.

This is predicted to jump even higher without proper intervention, education and support.

Associate Professor Glynis Ross, an endocrinologist and president of the Australian Diabetes Society, said the dramatic increase was the result of "many factors".

"The strongest ones would be the maternal age — the older the woman is, the more risk of gestational diabetes — and ethnicity," Prof Ross said.

"The whole population has also seen a trend of increasing obesity, including in women of child-bearing age.

"This means now about one in six pregnancies will result in gestational diabetes."

Women were usually screened for gestational diabetes between 26 and 28 weeks' pregnant.

But recently there had been an increase in early diagnosis, Prof Ross said.

There are now about 110 pregnant women told they have the condition a day in Australia.

Merrida mum Karla Jennings was diagnosed with gestational diabetes during both her pregnancies.

She said having to learn how to prick her finger to test sugar levels and inject insulin had been "confronting".

"Your initial reaction is shock, because you don't expect it to happen to you," Ms Jennings said.

"For me I moved straight



Karla Jennings had gestational diabetes during her pregnancies with Lorelai, 10, and Hayden, 8. Picture: JAY TOWN

into how do I manage it — I'm good with a task. But it was hard knowing that it's not you that is potentially going to suffer, it's the baby."

As a precaution, both of Ms Jennings' children were delivered early — happy and healthy.

But she was later diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, a known risk factor of gestational diabetes, and bat-

ted post-natal depression. "That was really hard to take," she said. "But I've had some really good support systems in place."

The anticipated rise in cases is predicted to place a bigger strain on the country's health system, as women with gestational diabetes need closer monitoring.

Prof Ross said it was important to educate women

and mums-to-be, but also reassure them it was a manageable and common condition once diagnosed.

She said with proper exercise, diet and lifestyle habits, risks could be reduced.

"It is very worrying and it

would be fantastic if we could intervene and reduce the number of women coming through with gestational diabetes," she said.

The predictions are part of a new position statement released on Wednesday by Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Educators Association and the Australian Diabetes Society.

alanah.frost@news.com.au

