Resource Column

Web Sites that Address Gestational Diabetes and Perinatal Obesity

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Abstract

Obesity contributes to multiple health problems during pregnancy and predisposes a woman to develop gestational diabetes. This column reviews the currently best Web sites that address gestational diabetes and obesity during the perinatal period.

Journal of Perinatal Education, 12(1), 51–53; gestational diabetes, perinatal obesity, Internet resources.

Obesity is a major public health issue with nearly 20% of U.S. adults being obese in 2000 (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2001a). Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 30 (CDC, 2001b). Overweight is defined as a BMI of 25.0–29.9 and normal weight is defined as a BMI 20–24.9 (Baeten, Bukusi, & Lambe, 2001). Individuals with a BMI of 20 or less are defined as underweight (Baeten et al., 2001). In 2000, 19.4% of all women were defined as obese, up from 12.2% in 1991 (CDC, 2001b). While all racial groups have experienced increases in the percentages of obesity, African American women have the highest rate of obesity at 29.3% (CDC, 2001b). Those with a high school degree or less and ex-smokers also have higher percentages of obesity (CDC, 2001b).

Obesity contributes to multiple health problems during pregnancy and predisposes a woman to develop gestational diabetes (Kieffer et al., 2001). Gestational diabetes has significant effects on a woman's quality of life, health, and pregnancy. Gestational diabetes is a carbohydrate intolerance that first develops or is first diagnosed during pregnancy and is characterized by elevated blood glucose levels (Gilbert & Harmon, 1998). The fetus may be large for gestation and may have increased difficulty adapting to extrauterine life. Stillbirth

is also a risk in the pregnant woman with gestational diabetes. Women who develop gestational diabetes during pregnancy are at risk to develop diabetes later in life. At present, it is unclear if preventing gestational diabetes would reduce a woman's risk of later developing diabetes.

This column highlights the currently best Web sites that address gestational diabetes and obesity during the perinatal period. Web sites are divided by their appropriateness for consumers and health care providers.

Gestational Diabetes

Web Sites Appropriate for Consumers

- MSN Health Gestational Diabetes
<http://content.health.msn.com/content/article/1667.51908>

This site is produced in collaboration with WebMD and The Cleveland Clinic. The site includes simple text for the average reader and is easy to navigate. The site is presented like a table of contents and the user only needs to click on the topic of interest. Sections address the following questions: What is gestational diabetes? What causes gestational diabetes? Am I at risk for gestational diabetes? How is gestational diabetes diagnosed? How is gestational diabetes managed? How do I monitor my blood sugar? How will my diet change? Should I exercise if I have gestational diabetes? How much weight gain is safe? Do I need to take insulin? What are some complications of gestational diabetes? What happens to my baby after delivery? Since I have gestational diabetes, does it mean my baby will have diabetes? Will I still have diabetes after I deliver my baby?

The copyright date for this information is current and clearly displayed on the Web page. The physician editor's name and credentials are given for additional credibility. If one desires to know additional information about the editor, a link is provided. There is also a link to the clinic site. This Web site does have some advertisements; however, they are peripheral and not too distracting.

- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: Understanding Gestational Diabetes, Table of Contents
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/gesttoc.htm>

This Web site lists a table of contents for the user to easily locate information. Sections include an introduc-

tion, glucose monitoring, diet and weight gain, exercise, and a glossary of commonly used terms. Clicking on a topic area leads the user to the section of text. Extensive information is provided in basic language. Despite the division of content, some of these sections are a bit long. However, the charts, tables, graphs, and pictures nicely accent the text. No advertisements appear on the site and a last-modified date is shown at the bottom.

Web Sites Appropriate for Professionals

- *British Medical Journal*—Birth Characteristics of Women Who Develop Gestational Diabetes: Population Based Study
http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m0999/7260_321/66676921/p1/article.jhtml

This Web site is a link to an article published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2000. While the publication is older, the content is still accurate. This comprehensive article focuses on health care providers. Author information and contact addresses are provided. The only negative feature of this site is the many distracting advertisements that border the page. A much smaller portion of the page is devoted to the actual text of the article because of these advertisements. One must flip through several pages to reach the end of the text.

- *Nutrition Today's* Gestational Diabetes Mellitus: Etiology and Management
http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m0841/5_34/57386969/p1/article.jhtml?term=

This Web page is a link to an article that appeared in *Nutrition Today* in 1999. While it is a few years old, the article contains good content. The author's name and credentials are prominently displayed with additional contact information available. One highlight of this article is that it contains a section on terms related to gestational diabetes mellitus. Additionally, the user may print or email the article from this site. The comprehensive article is easy to navigate. An inclusive reference list is provided. The only negative feature of this site is the many distracting advertisements that border the page. A much smaller portion of the page is devoted to the actual text of the article because of these advertisements. One must flip through several pages to reach the end of the text.

Perinatal Obesity

Web Sites Appropriate for Professionals

- Cornell News: Losing Pregnancy Weight
<http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/may02/mom.babyfat.ssl.html>

This Web site is a brief news report of research regarding losing weight after giving birth. The site contains short paragraphs to facilitate navigation. The report is from May 2002. Contact information is provided for the Cornell University publicist and the researchers. Biographical information and links to previous research are provided for the investigators.

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Electronic Textbook: Guidelines on Overweight and Obesity, Obesity and Women's Health
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/e_txbk/ratnl/22111.htm

This Web site is a portion of an electronic textbook that is produced by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. The electronic textbook is comprehensive; the pregnancy section is described here. The textbook is geared toward health care providers and focuses on patient management. Brief synopses are provided for major sections of the book. Additional related information is merely a click away to other sections of the book. A table of contents is provided at the very beginning of the text to facilitate information retrieval. Short paragraphs facilitate rapid reading and

skimming of the material. Direct links are provided for the citations included throughout the text. The entire book or specific sections may be printed using portable document formatting (PDF). It is noted on the beginning pages that this electronic textbook began as a committee to address dissemination of this content via the Web. This committee began in late 1995; however, the exact publication date of the text is unclear and the site may or may not be continually updated. At this writing, the content was current and accurate.

References

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- *Nutrition Today's* Gestational Diabetes Mellitus: Etiology and Management
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This box may be copied and used as a handout for expectant parents, compliments of Lamaze International (www.lamaze.org).