

New Zealand calls for improvement in diagnosis of gestational diabetes

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Changing the way gestational diabetes is diagnosed could reduce harms for mothers and babies



A Liggins Institute study of over 4,000 pregnant New Zealand women suggests the country can improve babies' health and reduce medical risks for mums by changing how gestational diabetes is diagnosed. The study assessed the value of lowering the blood-sugar threshold for diagnosis.

The University of Auckland researchers tested the blood-sugar level currently used in Aotearoa New Zealand to diagnose diabetes that can develop during pregnancy against a lower level commonly used overseas.

In the whole study population, women with mild gestational diabetes that was diagnosed using the lower blood sugar threshold and therefore treated, received more health interventions and used more health services than women in the higher diagnostic group. Their babies were more likely to be treated for low blood sugar after birth (27.2% versus 9%), probably because they were being monitored more closely.

The next step will be to follow up the mothers and the children just before they start school to assess the effects of the two different diagnostic thresholds on their later health and well-being.

Gestational diabetes is a major worldwide health problem with immediate and lifelong implications for the women affected and their babies.