

Pregnancy after bariatric surgery or with a weight above a healthy range

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about weight during pregnancy.

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you.

In Queensland about half of pregnant women have a weight above the healthy range.

Is your weight in the healthy weight range?

- calculating your body mass index (BMI) will inform you of your weight classification
- BMI is calculated by dividing body weight in kilograms by height in metres squared (kg/m^2)
- the healthy weight range is 18.5 to 24.9 kg/m^2
- when someone is over the healthy weight range it is much more than your clothing size or how you look, it may directly impact your health and wellbeing
- talk to your health care provider about your BMI

What words are used in health care about body weight

- health care providers commonly use words like 'BMI', 'healthy weight range', 'overweight', 'obese', and/or obesity classifications (e.g. class I, II, or III)
- BMI ranges are linked to these words indicating the chance of health problems (e.g. obese class III indicates a greater rate of health problems than obese class I)
- if you have a preference about the words used to talk about your weight, share them with your health care providers

Before you are pregnant

If you have had bariatric surgery, or you or your partner are above a healthy weight range, going to your GP for a health check is a good idea. Your GP can help you with:

- best timing of pregnancy related to your health
- screening tests to check for health issues related to body weight
- healthy eating, physical activity, and lifestyle choices
- vitamin and mineral tablets (often called supplements)
- referral to other health care professionals for support

Does having a weight above a healthy range affect pregnancy?

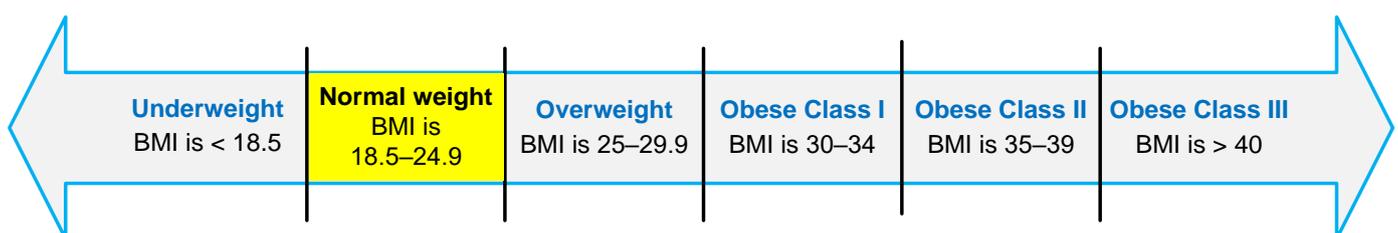
Many women have a pregnancy and birth experience no different to women in a healthy weight range. However, as BMI increases there is a greater chance of experiencing problems, such as

For women

- difficulty falling pregnant
- pregnancy loss or stillbirth
- gestational diabetes
- high blood pressure/pre-eclampsia
- blood clots

For babies

- birth defects such as spina bifida
- higher birth weight
- jaundice
- admission to a neonatal nursery
- childhood obesity



What if you have had bariatric surgery?

After bariatric surgery (surgery to assist with weight reduction, such as gastric sleeve, bypass or lap band) it is important you get enough nutrients including vitamins and minerals (also called micronutrients).

Vitamin and mineral tablets and extra blood tests are recommended in addition to a healthy diet.

It is best to plan a pregnancy after your micronutrient levels and your weight have stabilised. Enough nutrients are important to prevent problems like:

- birth defects
- slow growth of your baby during pregnancy
- baby born early (preterm/premature)
- lower birth weight
- stillbirth

Is extra care needed for pregnancy?

- see your doctor or midwife early in pregnancy so they can help work out the best care for you
- extra blood tests and ultrasound scans to check on baby's growth may be recommended
- you will likely be offered extra appointments (e.g. with a dietitian)

How much weight gain is ok?

Using a weight gain chart for pregnancy may help you keep track of your weight.

Recommendation
For all women in the first 12 weeks, a weight gain of 0.5 to 2 kgs—then
Then, if your BMI is 25–29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a gain of 0.3 kg each week • with a total gain in pregnancy of 7 to 11.5 kg
Or if your BMI is 30 or more <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a gain of 0.2 kg each week • with a total gain in pregnancy of 5 to 9 kg

Is there anything different for labour and birth?

Your healthcare team will discuss additional options and choices for your labour and birth. It depends on your own situation.

- Sometimes transfer to another hospital to give birth might be recommended
- a 'drip' or access to a vein may be recommended in case you need additional medications
- monitoring your baby's heart continuously throughout your labour may be recommended
- an anaesthetist may ask to see you in case you need an epidural or anaesthetic
- you may notice extra staff caring for you
- an injection to reduce the risk of bleeding when the placenta comes is recommended

Will you be able to breastfeed?

- yes, breastfeeding is recommended, and you will be supported to feed your baby however you choose
- you may find that you need some extra support with positioning your baby to feed and sometimes it takes a bit longer for your milk supply to increase
- if you have had bariatric surgery in the past your GP or dietitian will continue to monitor your vitamin and mineral levels during breastfeeding
- your healthcare team are there to support you, so ask for help when you need it

The early days

- try to get back on your feet as soon as you are able, to reduce your risk of blood clots
- care providers usually continue to visit you at home after discharge
- community child health clinics offer ongoing support with feeding and parenting

What about my weight after pregnancy?

It is important to continue to monitor your weight after your baby is born. The weight you gained during pregnancy should have come off by around six months after birth. This helps to reduce your chance of keeping weight on in the long term.

Maintaining the healthy lifestyle choices made during pregnancy may be an important step for you and your family. Talk to your GP or dietitian about ongoing support with your healthy lifestyle choices and timing of future pregnancies.

What can you do if you are feeling uncomfortable or unsupported?

Sometimes people can seem judgemental and critical about larger body sizes. This can be upsetting, cause distress or make some women feel uncomfortable. This experience makes some women put off seeing their health care providers.

Speaking up about uncomfortable feelings will help guide your health care provider to give the care that's best for you and your baby.

Healthy choices

Making lifestyle choices, such as healthy eating and physical activity and working with your healthcare team on how much weight to gain during pregnancy, can help keep you and your baby healthy.



Support & Information

13HEALTH (13 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public. www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Lifeline 13 11 14 Lifeline offers a telephone crisis support service to anyone. www.lifeline.org.au

Women's Health Queensland Wide 1800 017 676 (free call) offers health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals throughout Queensland. www.womhealth.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association 1800 686268 (breastfeeding helpline). Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Pregnancy Counselling Link (PCL) 1800 777 690 www.pcl.org.au/Community agency staffed by qualified, professional counsellors, who support women, partners and other family members in the areas of pregnancy, parenting, relationships, navigating life changes, fertility issues, loss and grief.

Child Health Service Provides newborn drop-in services, early feeding and support, child health clinics. Refer to

www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/community-health/child-health-service for your nearest service

Parentline Queensland Helpline: 1300 30 1300 <https://parentline.com.au/> Professional counselling and support for expecting and all parents 8am-10pm 7 days a week.