

A Mediterranean style diet during pregnancy reduces weight gain and gestational diabetes.

Currently 25% of mothers enter pregnancy with pre-existing conditions including obesity, raised lipid levels or chronic hypertension. This can lead to pregnancy complications including gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia.

A recent study (the ESTEEM study) undertaken by researchers at Queen Mary University of London involving maternity units at four London hospitals and one in Birmingham included 1252 pregnant women with metabolic risk factors. Study participants were randomised to receive either routine antenatal care or a Mediterranean-style diet in addition to their routine antenatal care.

The diet included a high intake of “nuts, extra virgin olive oil, fruit, vegetables, non-refined grains, and legumes; moderate to high consumption of fish, small to moderate intake of poultry and dairy products; low intake of red meat and processed meat, and avoidance of sugary drinks, fast food, and food rich in animal fat”. The diet was made culturally sensitive by providing cooking advice through a bespoke recipe book so elements of the diet could be incorporated into local cuisine. Individualised dietary advice was also provided for participants at 18, 20, and 28 weeks gestation.

The findings of the study suggest that a simple, individualised, Mediterranean-style diet in pregnancy has the potential to reduce gestational weight gain and the risk of gestational diabetes but it did not reduce the overall risk of adverse maternal and offspring complications.

The full text of the study is available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6650045/>