

April 6, 2015 Today's Health for the Empowered Woman

## PROBLEMS FOR OBESE MOTHERS

In previous articles in 2009 and in 2010 I wrote of problems related to obesity in pregnancy and also of the obesity epidemic. It is now time to discuss the difficulties that obese mothers encounter in dealing with the everyday work of caring for their children. To quickly summarize previous articles, 70% of women are classified as obese and this is epidemic in the United States. Poor dietary choices, lack of activity and heredity all predispose to the problem. Relatively cheap fast food loaded with trans fats and carbohydrates seem like logical choices to women who are struggling financially but greatly add to the problem. The obese have much greater risks of diabetes, heart attack, stroke, cancer, gall bladder disease, joint related problems and death. Pregnancy is complicated by these factors and vaginal delivery is more difficult, cesarean sections are more common with increased attendant risk at the time of surgery and increased potential post operative complications from bleeding, poor wound healing, blood clots, pneumonia, etc. Monitoring the fetus during labor is difficult, finding veins for intravenous fluids is laborious and adequate repositioning during labor becomes a task. But the point of this article is: ok, the baby is ultimately delivered and ready to go home. The obese mother is likely to have obese children either or both from genetic predisposition or from the same poor food choices and lifestyle. These moms are no less loving than the non obese but there are struggles that they encounter. Getting a squirming baby or child into a required car seat is a mechanical nightmare; shopping with a baby in a shopping cart and lack of mobility is exhausting; decreased energy due to sheer weight or from the carbohydrate letdown makes chasing after a toddler very difficult and dangerous. There needs to be quick intervention if a child is crossing the street, running from danger, etc. Getting a child ready for bed with bathing and pajamas is much more difficult. Parents should be involved in all or most of their children's activities including exercise. Obese mothers have a hard time engaging in these activities that might include walking, swimming, baseball or even just goofing around in the yard. Ultimately as the child grows into the adolescent years and then the dreaded teens many of these kids resent their obese mothers and regret the lack of maternally shared activity. I guess there is no other way to say it: if dieting and exercise are impossible or not effective, bariatric surgery must be considered BEFORE conception but one must be mindful of the risk of surgery. If that is not possible then a mom must set an example for her children with food choices, portion control, exercise to enable a safe environment for the child and to ensure that her child goes on to make healthy choices herself. The mom has then empowered her own child to a healthy and safe life.