



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES

## PRE-NATAL WEIGHT CONTROL MAY PREVENT DISABILITY

*Evidence-based programs should be conducted to control weight during pregnancy to prevent birth defects and disability of infants.*

A forum was held at the National Press Club on “How Much Weight Women Should Gain During Pregnancy.” Presenters at the forum were researchers, policy experts and leaders in the field of public health.

### **Summary**

Validation of effects of experimental studies is needed to aid providers and communities in determining how best to help women—especially low income and minority women—meet Institute of Medicine (IOM) guidelines that address weight control during pregnancy. Adequate nutrition is part of a healthy pregnancy, but few intervention studies have evaluated ways to improve the nutritional choices of women of child-bearing age. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides support to researchers to conduct observational and experimental studies to assess the impact of gestational weight gain (GWG) variations on a range of child outcomes such as weight and body composition at birth, neurodevelopment, obesity and related outcomes, and asthma later in life. In addition, there is research that explores mechanisms that underlie the effects of GWG on maternal and child outcomes, which include the extent to which achieving optimal GWG differs from not achieving optimal GWG on factors including age, socioeconomic status, and co-morbidities.

### **Disability Prevention Issue**

Women will require assistance in implementing strategies to meet the recommendations outlined in the IOM report. There is a need to publicize guidelines to staff in Federal agencies and volunteer organizations regarding preconception services, such as counseling, contraception, information on maintaining a healthy diet and being physically active, to all overweight women so they reach a healthy weight before conceiving. Opportunities should be provided for vulnerable populations to avoid risk factors to the child and the mother which include patterns of dietary intake, physical activity, and metabolic loss during pregnancy to prevent birth defects and diminished health.

### **Activity**

A letter was sent to staff of the National Academy of Science to comment on post-forum discussion on the need for evidence-based protocols to effectively implement the “IOM Pregnancy Weight Guidelines”

**Principle**

Evidence based programs should be conducted to control weight during pregnancy to prevent birth defects and disability of infants.