

More Scots mothers overweight than healthy before birth

More Scottish mothers-to-be are overweight or obese than of healthy weight, which could be driving an increase in births by caesarean section, NHS data reveals.

One of Scotland's top midwives said she was "deeply concerned" by the rise in c-sections linked to older and more overweight mothers, who are likely to need additional support due to potential complications in pregnancy. Only half of the 54,440 births in 2015-16 were delivered without medical intervention, compared to 75 per cent in the mid 1970s, according to ISD Scotland. Emergency and elective c-sections tripled during this period to 31 per cent of all deliveries. The stark figures reveal that nearly half of mothers accessing antenatal care were overweight or obese, while 45.5 per cent of the mothers were a healthy weight. More women are waiting to start families, as the figures show more than half of mothers were over the age of 30 in 2015/16. Gillian Smith, Scotland director of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), said: "I remain deeply concerned about some of the results, and it appears that in too many areas we are moving in the wrong direction. "The continued rise in caesarean sections is a worry. Whilst some are needed for medical reasons we need to know why the rate is increasing, and take steps to address this."

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Coping with more complex births for older and more overweight mothers will heap further strain on the ageing workforce, she said, as around 40 per cent of Scottish midwives are approaching retirement. Obesity campaigners also spoke out over the "alarming" figures, citing increased risks of high blood pressure, gestational diabetes and miscarriage for overweight mothers. **Lorraine Tulloch, programme lead of Obesity Action Scotland, said: "Today's statistics on overweight and obesity in Scottish mothers are alarming. "We know that mothers with obesity compared to those of normal weight are twice as likely to have children who are obese. Obese children are more likely to be ill, be absent from school due to illness, experience health-related limitations and require more medical care than normal weight children. We need to do much more to address this crisis and we must urgently improve the diet of Scottish mothers and children."**

Public health minister Aileen Campbell said: "Caesarean section is a safe form of delivery for mother and baby, and there are a number of good clinical reasons why this may be recommended for some women such as breech or multiple births or where there has been a

previous caesarean section. “The increasing rate is a long term trend and the Scottish Government, along with NHS Boards, are developing a better understanding of this.”

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/more-scots-mothers-overweight-than-healthy-before-birth-1-4304417>