Higher maternal BMI early in pregnancy is associated with overweight and obesity in young adult offspring in Thailand

Rates of overweight and obesity have been increasing steadily in Thailand over the last decade, including amongst women of reproductive age. This is a cause for concern for both mothers and their offspring. This study investigated the relationship between overweight and obesity in mother’s vs their children using BMI as a parameter. Data from a study of a birth cohort in Chiang Mai between 1989-1990 was used. The participants in this study were 628 young adults (i.e., the children of the pregnant women recruited for the birth cohort in Chiang Mai) who agreed to have their weight and weight measured, in addition to collecting blood and blood pressure samples.

On average, the children of mothers with overweight and obesity were between 9.4-14.1kg heavier than those born to mothers with underweight or normal weight. These findings support the evidence emerging from Western countries that report on the nature of early-onset of obesity pre-determined by mothers. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of maternal obesity during pregnancy on cardiometabolic dysfunction, including the differences between different ethnic groups and populations. There is still uncertainty on the mechanisms underpinning the effects observed, thus this should also remain a key focus of future research.

‘Greater recognition of the impacts of maternal obesity on the health of future generations is required to inform public health policy and intervention, particularly to foster healthier lifestyle choices among women of childbearing age (i.e., before conception).