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## Rising Obesity Rate is Driving up Canada's C-Section Rate

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*Canada's fast-rising obesity rate is driving up the rate of Cesarean sections, and obese women are facing greater risks during pregnancy.*

Obese women (those with a body mass index [BMI] greater than 30) tend to both give birth to larger babies and to experience longer labors. Both of these factors contribute to an increased likelihood that a C-section will be necessary. Moreover, Cesareans are more difficult to perform on obese women, and carry increased risks for the mother during pregnancy and childbirth.

### In Canada:

- In 2004, 23% of Canadian women were considered obese. This rate is up from the 16% indicated by data collected between 1986 and 1992.<sup>1</sup>
- During the same period, obesity rates rose most dramatically for women in their child-bearing years. Obesity nearly doubled among women aged 25 to 34, the group that gives birth to over 60 percent of the children born in Canada each year.<sup>1,2</sup>

### What are the risks of obesity during pregnancy?

#### 1. Challenges for obstetricians

- a. Obesity is associated with many health risks such as heart disease and diabetes, as well as generally poorer health of the mother, which may require special care.
- b. C-sections may be more challenging to perform on obese women, as more tissue must be cut during the procedure, and additional bleeding may occur.

#### 2. Risks for the mother

Obesity adds additional risk factors for the mother during pregnancy and birth:

- a. hypertension during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia)
- b. gestational diabetes
- c. anesthetic risks
- d. blood clots

#### 3. Risks for the baby

Children of obese mothers have an increased risk of being born with conditions such as:

- a. congenital heart defects
- b. neural tube defects

### The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada...

Generally recommends that obese women be followed jointly with a qualified dietician and receive more frequent monitory visits. Weight gain restriction is not the answer, but rather proper nutrition and surveillance will decrease the risk of potential problems.

### References

1. Statistics Canada - Trends in adult obesity (August 2006) <http://www.statcan.ca/english/studies/82-003/archive/2006/17-3-d.pdf>
2. Statistics Canada - Pregnancy Outcomes by age group (CANSIM Table 106-9002) <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/hlth65b.htm?sdi=births%20age>

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## About the SOGC

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, outreach and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit [www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org).