



Diabetes quadruples risk of birth defects

The risk of having a baby with a birth defect is almost four-times higher in women with diabetes compared with those without the condition, according to new research published in *Diabetologia*.

The Newcastle University study analysed data from more than 400 000 pregnancies in North East England, and found that one out of 13 pregnant women with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes give birth to a child with a major congenital abnormality as a direct result of their condition.

The risk of birth defects went from 19 in every 1000 births for women without pre-existing diabetes to 72 in every 1000 births for women with diabetes.

Overall, the risk of having a child with a birth defect of whatever kind was 7% for women with diabetes compared with 2% in those without the condition.

Blood glucose levels pre-conception were the “most important” risk factor. Women from poorer backgrounds, or who did not take folic acid, were also at higher risk.

Lead researcher, Dr Ruth Bell, said: “Many of these anomalies happen in the first 4–6 weeks . . . It is a problem when the pregnancy is not intended or when people are not aware they need to talk to their doctors before pregnancy.”

The Guardian
6 February 2012

Fat doctors less likely to encourage weight loss

Overweight doctors are less likely to help their patients lose weight, research suggests.

The US study showed that doctors with a BMI ≥ 25 kg/m² were less effective at tackling obesity than those of a normal weight.

The researchers from Johns Hopkins University found they were less likely to diagnose obese people, felt more embarrassed about offering weight loss advice, and shied away from discussing the topic with their patients.

Mail Online
31 January 2012

Chemical in plastics linked to obesity

A chemical widely used in plastics and food-can linings is linked to weight gain and diabetes, research suggests.

The study, published in *PLoS ONE*, shows that the chemical bisphenol A (BPA) – used in a variety of fertilisers and plastic water bottles, and which has been linked to cancer and labelled a toxic substance in Canada – can “fool” the body into creating more fat, and can lead to increased insulin production.

Researchers from the Miguel Hernandez University in Spain showed that only a quarter

of a billionth of a gram of BPA was needed to trigger the release of almost double the insulin actually needed to break down food.

Lead researcher Angel Nadal said: “When you eat something with BPA, it’s like telling your organs that you are eating more than you are really eating.”

Evidence suggests that 90% of people in developed countries have BPA levels in their blood above the threshold in Dr Nadal’s study.

Mail Online
16 February 2012

Defective gene may help type 1 diabetes

Discovery of a defective gene in people born without a pancreas has provided a “key” to treating those type 1 diabetes, according to new research.

The gene – GATA6 – is vital to the development of the pancreas. It is hoped the discovery could help lead to stem-cell treatments for type 1 diabetes.

Andrew Hattersley, Professor of Molecular Medicine at the Peninsula College of

Medicine and Dentistry, said: “until now nobody had realised how crucial GATA6 was to the production of insulin-producing beta-cells.

“Our study suggests that GATA6 plays a very important role . . . and we hope this will help the crucial work to try and make beta-cells for patients with type 1 diabetes.”

BBC News
12 December 2011

MEDIA LITE

A Mars a day helps you ... count calories?

Low-fat diets, low-carbohydrate diets, low-GI diets, very-low-calorie liquid diets... Now the dietary leap we’ve all been waiting for; Mars Inc. has announced plans to cap the calorie content of its chocolate bars at 250 calories by the end of next year.

The new limit means aficionados of the 540-calorie king-size Snickers bar might want to enjoy it while they can – by 2014, it will be gone, in part of what Mars says is a broader push for “responsible snacking”.

The company has a record of reducing the size of its bars without a drop in price in what some have termed “back door” price rises. However, Mars Inc. insists the initiative is a genuine attempt to help combat obesity.

Chocolate-lovers fear not; the move will not include “duo packs” or larger family bars because they are, according to a spokesperson, designed to be “shared”.

Whatever next – the Small Mac?

Mail Online
17 February 2012