
Gestational diabetes a hidden threat to maternal and neonatal health

In marking International Women's Day on March 8, [Management Sciences for Health](#) [1] (MSH), the [International Diabetes Federation](#) [2] (IDF), and the NCD Alliance are calling for recognition of gestational diabetes as a priority maternal and newborn health issue, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where a woman's lifetime risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth is 1 in 38, compared to 1 in 3,700 in the developed world.

"International Women's Day is an opportunity to reflect on progress made on gender equality, and redouble efforts on new challenges facing girls and women in the 21st century. Gestational diabetes for too long has been an overlooked maternal and newborn health issue," said Katie Dain, executive director, NCD Alliance. "Concerted action on gestational diabetes has the potential to accelerate progress toward the MDGs, and simultaneously curb the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). It is a win-win situation."

High rates of gestational diabetes may be a hidden factor in the continuing high ratios of maternal and neonatal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa, yet relatively easy and low-cost interventions could reverse the trend, according to a recent [study](#) [3] conducted in Ethiopia by MSH.

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