Children born to obese mothers may be more likely to die earlier

By ACSH Staff — August 15, 2013

Previous research has found that children born to obese mothers are at higher risk of developing high blood sugar, high blood pressure and other cardiac risk factors as young adults. They are also at greater risk for congenital abnormalities and behavioral problems during childhood. However, these studies did not extend beyond adolescence. Now, a new study published in the *British Medical Journal* posits that these children are more likely to die earlier than those children born to normal weight mothers.

Rebecca Reynolds, a professor at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and colleagues looked at the birth and death records for 38,000 people born after 1950 and found that children born to obese mothers had a 35 percent increased risk of dying early as compared to children born to normal weight mothers. The majority of those deaths were related to cardiac events.

The researchers believe that this finding is due to a combination of factors. First, it may have something to do with the environment to which the developing baby is exposed in the womb. The baby may be taking in extra nutrients or there may be changes in metabolism or structure of the blood vessels and the heart. These same finding may arise from genetic factors linked to maternal obesity. And last, lifestyle factors may be at play, such as the diet and home environment to which the child is exposed during its formative years.

Reynolds says that future research is needed to investigate whether these health outcomes may be prevented. She also urges women planning to become pregnant to be vigilant about keeping their weight at healthy levels.