

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

## Pregnancy: Reduce Your Child's Risk For Obesity

Small children are not the only ones at risk for obesity at a young age—infants are also affected. With proper prenatal care and breastfeeding, you can help prevent obesity in your children.

### **Prenatal Care**

An important prenatal factor in childhood obesity is weight gain before and during pregnancy. The more weight you gain, the greater your risk of gestational diabetes and other conditions during pregnancy. If a mother has diabetes during pregnancy, her child has a higher risk of being overweight and of also having diabetes. This makes it very important for mothers to maintain a healthy weight during pregnancy.

Smoking, especially during early pregnancy, greatly increases your child's risk of obesity. Smoking is linked to low intrauterine growth, leading to a low birth weight. Babies with a low birth weight may experience rapid growth after birth, which is associated

with an increased risk of being overweight.

### **Breastfeeding**

Studies have found that children who are breastfed are at nearly 25 percent reduced risk of obesity. Breastfeeding is healthier than formula for two reasons. Mother's milk contains half as much protein per serving as formula and helps the baby's liver regulate metabolism. Formula, however, may increase levels of insulin and decrease the amount of leptin, a hormone that inhibits appetite and controls body fatness.

So why aren't more mothers breastfeeding? Many women are running into barriers that make it difficult to breastfeed. Such barriers include lack of support and employer accommodation. Fortunately, the number of support networks has been increasing, and it is easier to find

counseling and guidance on how to feed your baby. And under the Affordable Care Act, many employers are now required to make accommodations for breastfeeding mothers, such as longer breaks and private rooms in which to breastfeed.

Ask your doctor for help and your employer for support in breastfeeding so you can help prevent obesity in your child.

### **Did You Know...?**

Clinical trials indicate that weight gain can be modified by prenatal counseling.