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Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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**Sunnah Food &
Healthy Foods****YOUR HEALTH. YOUR AMANAH. YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE.**

Eating well, staying active and caring for our bodies are more than lifestyle choices. In Islam, our health is an Amanah. In this issue of the ARIF Bulletin, we shine a spotlight on obesity in pregnancy—a growing global health challenge and chronic condition that deserves more than a number on a weighing scale.

Pregnancy does not begin with the first heartbeat. It begins with the mother's health. Higher body weight can affect fertility and pregnancy outcomes, and may increase the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and other complications. These can extend into labour, delivery and recovery after childbirth. But this is not about weight. It is about health.

The journey does not end when the baby is born. The healthy choices we make today shape the environment our children grow up in. By caring for our health, we lay the foundation for healthier babies, stronger families and a healthier next generation.

There is no shame in starting small 🌱 No shame in starting late 🌱 No shame in starting again 🌱 Keeping fit is an amanah 🌱 Eating mindfully is an act of care 🌱 Choosing health is an investment in our family's future.

Because change does not have to happen all at once.

It starts with you. It starts with one step.

Obesity in Pregnancy

by Dr Muhammad Fairuz Abdul Rahman

About 1 in 5 pregnant women worldwide is obese. In Singapore, about 24% of pregnant women are overweight and 11% are clinically obese.¹

Being overweight or obese does not mean that you will have problems during pregnancy. Many women have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. However, a higher BMI can increase the chance of certain complications. In general, the higher the BMI, the greater the risk.

BMI (Body Mass Index) is a simple measure of weight in relation to height.
$$\text{BMI} = \text{Weight (kg)} \div \text{Height}^2 (\text{m}^2)$$

	BMI Range [kg/m2]
Underweight	< 18.5
Normal	18.5 - 24.9
Overweight	25.0 - 29.9
Class I Obesity	30 - 34.9
Class II Obesity	35 - 39.9
Class III Obesity	≥ 40

Your BMI is usually checked at your first pregnancy appointment. Women with a BMI of 35 or above may need closer monitoring during pregnancy.



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Pregnancy & Your Baby

Miscarriage: Being overweight or obese may increase the chance of miscarriage. A Singapore study found a **higher chance of miscarriage** among women who were overweight or obese, although the difference was not statistically significant².

Pregnancy screening: Some blood tests, such as the test used to screen for Down syndrome (NIPT), may **sometimes give an unclear result** when there is not enough baby-related DNA in the mother's blood. This is more common with a higher BMI⁴.



Ultrasound scans: It may be **harder to obtain clear pictures** of your baby's organs when there is more tissue around the abdomen. You may therefore need a longer or repeat scan³.

Birth conditions: Obesity is associated with a **higher chance of certain problems** affecting the baby's spine, brain and heart³. Your doctor will advise you about the appropriate dose of folic acid before and during pregnancy.

Diabetes in pregnancy: Women who are obese have a **higher chance of developing diabetes** during pregnancy⁵. You may need an earlier blood sugar test and another test at around 24–28 weeks.

A larger baby: A higher BMI **increases the chance of having a larger baby**, particularly if diabetes is not well controlled. This can make labour and delivery more difficult⁵.

High blood pressure and pre-eclampsia: Women with a BMI of 35 or above have a **higher chance of developing pre-eclampsia**⁶. Your blood pressure will be checked regularly. Depending on your BMI and other risk factors, your doctor may recommend low-dose aspirin to reduce this risk.



Blood clots: Pregnancy already **increases the chance of blood clots** and obesity increases this risk further. Your risk will be checked during pregnancy and medication may be recommended if your risk is high⁶.

Emotional wellbeing: Being overweight or obese is associated with a **higher chance of anxiety and depression** during and after pregnancy⁷. Please speak to your healthcare team if you are feeling persistently worried, low or overwhelmed.



Some studies have also found an association between higher maternal weight during pregnancy and certain developmental and behavioural conditions in children. This does not mean that obesity directly causes these conditions⁸. Being overweight or obese during pregnancy can increase the risk of several health problems for both mother and baby.

Some weight gain during pregnancy is normal and healthy. However, gaining more weight than recommended may increase some pregnancy risks and make it harder to lose weight after delivery. Your healthcare team can advise you on the appropriate amount of weight to gain based on your BMI before pregnancy. **Pregnancy is not the time to try to lose weight. Instead, focus on healthy eating, safe physical activity and appropriate weight gain.** The following table gives a guidance on the recommended weight gain for the duration of pregnancy:



Guidelines for Pregnancy Weight Gain		
BMI (Pre-pregnancy)	Recommended Weight Gain (During Pregnancy)	Recommended Weight Gain for Twin/Multiple Births
<18.5	12.7 – 18.1kg	Discuss with your obstetrician and/or dietitian
18.5 – 24.9	11.3 – 15.9kg	16.8 – 24.5kg
25.0 – 29.9	6.8 – 11.3kg	14.1 – 22.7kg
≥ 30	5.0 – 9.1kg	11.3 – 19.1kg
* Adopted from Institute of Medicine Guidelines (IOM 2009)		

During labour and delivery

A higher BMI can make labour and delivery more challenging. You may have a greater chance of:

- Labour being started artificially
- Assisted vaginal delivery
- Planned or emergency Caesarean section
- A longer or more difficult labour⁹

Monitoring your baby's heartbeat during labour may also be more difficult and your healthcare team may need additional time or equipment to obtain a clear recording.



Anaesthesia can also be more challenging. An epidural or spinal injection may take longer to perform. Women with a BMI of 40 or above may be referred to an anaesthetist during pregnancy to discuss pain relief and anaesthesia options⁶.



What You Can Do During Pregnancy

Having a higher BMI does not mean that you cannot have a healthy pregnancy. Working closely with your healthcare team can help reduce risks.

- ✓ **Attend your appointments regularly**
- ✓ **Have your blood pressure and blood sugar checked when advised**
- ✓ **Take folic acid and other supplements as recommended**
- ✓ **Take aspirin only if prescribed or recommended by your doctor**
- ✓ **Eat a balanced diet and stay active in ways that are safe during pregnancy**
- ✓ **Keep your pregnancy weight gain within the recommended range**
- ✓ **Attend additional scans or specialist appointments when advised**
- ✓ **Talk to someone if you are feeling worried, low or overwhelmed**

After Delivery

Recovery may take longer, with a higher chance of infection and slower wound healing⁹. There is also a higher chance of heavy bleeding after delivery¹⁰. Breastfeeding may take slightly longer to get started and may be more difficult for some women³. However, breastfeeding is still encouraged as it benefits both mother and baby and may support healthy weight and blood sugar levels.



Planning your next pregnancy

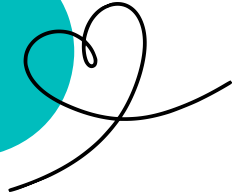
After delivery, giving your body time to recover and working towards a healthy weight can help prepare you for your next pregnancy. Effective contraception can help you plan the timing of your next pregnancy and avoid an unplanned pregnancy before you are ready.

In conclusion, a higher BMI does not define your pregnancy. **With the right care, planning and support, you can give yourself and your baby the best possible start.**



Keeping Fit As An Amanah

by Ustaz Muhammed Zaki Mahmud



We often think about our health only when something goes wrong. A health screening reminds us to watch our cholesterol, a doctor advises us to lose weight, or we find ourselves becoming tired more easily than before. Yet perhaps we should not wait for these reminders. **Taking care of our health should be part of our daily lives**, not simply something we think about when we fall sick.

Stress affects both mind and body. Tiredness, headaches, muscle tension and poor sleep can be signs that you are under strain. Pregnancy, caring for a newborn, returning to work or supporting elderly parents can add to this load.

Recognising the signs early allows us to pause, seek support and care for ourselves and our families before stress becomes overwhelming.



Our body is an amanah, a trust from Allah. Islam encourages us to look after this trust and to strive for strength and well-being. Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, “The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, while there is good in both.” Strength in Islam is not only about being physically fit, but also about having spiritual, emotional and mental strength. When we take care of our health, we are better able to worship Allah, fulfil our responsibilities and be there for our families.



The life of our Prophet PBUH also reminds us of the importance of being active. There are narrations about activities such as walking, wrestling, horse riding and archery. While we should be careful not to attribute modern exercise routines to the Prophet PBUH without strong evidence, these examples remind us that physical strength and useful physical activities were valued. We do not necessarily need to spend hours in the gym or go for a long run. A simple walk, playing with our children, taking the stairs or participating in a sport can also be part of an active lifestyle.

Taking care of our health also goes beyond exercise. **Islam teaches us the importance of moderation in eating and drinking.** Allah says, “Eat and drink, but do not be excessive.” This simple principle is very relevant to our lives today. With busy lifestyles and easy access to food, it can be easy to eat more than we need or choose food that may not be good for us when consumed too often. Over time, unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity can contribute to obesity and increase the risk of health problems.

Preventing obesity does not mean that we should be overly concerned about our appearance or constantly worry about our weight. Rather, it is about **looking after the body Allah has entrusted to us.**



Keeping healthy is a shared family responsibility. Balanced meals, regular activity and enough sleep are simple habits that can make a lasting difference when practised consistently.

Encourage one another, walk together, prepare healthier meals and make healthy choices as a family. Children learn from what we do, not just what we tell them. The healthy habits we build together today can stay with them for life.



At the same time, we should remember that **Islam teaches us balance.** Fitness should not become an obsession, nor should we neglect our religious obligations, family responsibilities or mental well-being in pursuit of physical fitness. The goal is not simply to look good, but **to live well, remain healthy and have the strength to fulfil the responsibilities Allah has given us.**

Ultimately, staying fit is part of taking care of an amanah. We make the effort to eat well, stay active and get enough rest, while recognising that **our health itself is a blessing from Allah.** Let us take better care of our bodies, encourage our families to adopt healthier habits, and use the strength Allah has given us for what is beneficial.

May Allah grant us and our families good health, strength and well-being, and allow us to use these blessings in ways that bring us closer to Him and benefit those around us. Ameen Ya Rabbal ‘Alamin.

Obesity : Looking Beyond Pregnancy

by Muhammad Hairril Mohammed Haniff

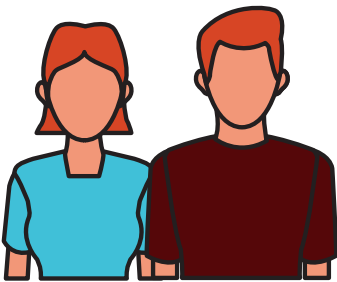


Obesity is more than a number on the weighing scale. Over time, carrying excess body weight can affect your heart, blood sugar, joints, sleep and overall wellbeing. It is linked to conditions such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

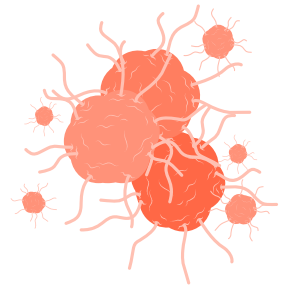


Obesity can also affect fertility in both women and men. Women may **take longer to become pregnant and have a higher chance of miscarriage**. In men, obesity **may affect hormone levels and sperm quality**, which can make it harder to conceive.

For women, long-term obesity is also linked to a higher risk of certain cancers, including **womb (endometrial) cancer and breast cancer after menopause**.

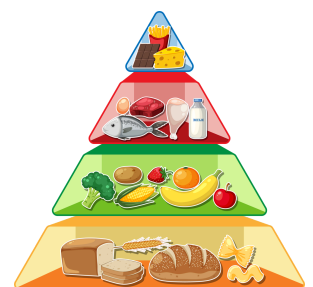


The good news is that small, sustainable changes can make a difference. Looking after your weight, eating well, staying active and having regular health checks can help protect your health and support your family's wellbeing - both now and in the future.



Sunnah Foods and Healthy Eating

The Sunnah encourages us to care for our health and practise moderation in eating. Foods such as olive oil and barley can be part of a healthy diet during pregnancy.



Olive oil provides healthy fats, while barley is rich in fibre and can be a nutritious choice as part of balanced meals. However, no single Sunnah food can prevent or treat obesity. Rather than focusing on one particular food, aim for a balanced diet with a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, protein and healthy fats, while enjoying appropriate portions and limiting foods high in sugar and unhealthy fats.

**In Islam, moderation is key.
Caring for your health during pregnancy is also part of caring
for the amanah entrusted to you.**

Conclusion

A Healthier Future Starts Today

Obesity is about more than weight or appearance. Over time, it can affect heart health, blood sugar, fertility, joints and overall wellbeing and during pregnancy, it can affect both mother and baby.

Islam reminds us to practise moderation and avoid excess. Sunnah foods such as olive oil and barley can be part of a balanced diet, but no single food is a cure for obesity.

The goal is not perfection, but balance. By combining the wisdom of our faith with evidence-based health advice, we can make small, sustainable choices that protect the health of Mum, baby and the whole family - today and for generations to come.



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