
Preface

Worldwide, there has been a dramatic increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in women of childbearing age. Current estimates suggest that 64.1% of the US women are overweight and 35.5% obese (Flegal et al. 2010). Overweight and obesity affects nearly half of the US women of reproductive age, with 24.5% being overweight and 23% obese (Vahratian 2009). In Europe, the prevalence of obesity in women range from 6.2% to 36.5%, displaying a considerable geographic variation, with higher prevalence rates in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe than in Western and Northern Europe (Berghofer et al. 2008).

Overweight and obese women have an increased risk of a wide variety of pregnancy, birth, and neonatal complications, and obesity is now the most common risk factor of pregnancy (Jensen et al. 2003; Ovesen et al. 2011). The clinical management of obese pregnant woman is a challenge throughout the whole course of pregnancy, and the maternal epidemic of obesity is putting additional stresses on the healthcare system, requiring more resources during pregnancy (Chu et al. 2008; Rowlands et al. 2010).

The worldwide epidemic of adolescent and adult obesity may not only be a result of our lifestyle of inadequate activity and poor diet. During recent years, a new research field dealing with “perinatal programming” of health and disease in later life has been established, whereby obesity and its complications are passed from one generation to the next. To prevent propagation of this vicious cycle, the treatment has to start in pregnancy (Catalano 2003).

This book presents an overview of the latest knowledge on maternal obesity and pregnancy. A wide range of issues are covered, including macrosomia and associated shoulder dystocia; the risk of miscarriage, malformations, stillbirth, and complications of pregnancy; the impact of hyperglycemia; clinical management; consequences for anesthesia and ultrasound; impacts on breastfeeding, fertility, and childhood obesity; pregnancy following gastric surgery; and the impact of exercise and weight gain during pregnancy. All of the authors are recognized experts on their field, and the book has been designed to meet the clinical needs of obstetricians, gynecologists, internists, and general practitioners.

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