



Will High Cholesterol Affect Pregnancy?

(NAPSA)—Cholesterol levels naturally rise during pregnancy and are not usually monitored or treated at that time. However, if you are the one out of every 200 adults who has an inherited form of high cholesterol, you may require special monitoring if you become pregnant.

Familial hypercholesterolemia, or FH, is an inherited defect in how the body recycles LDL (bad) cholesterol. Therefore, in untreated adults, LDL levels in the blood remain very high—above 190 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) of blood—making someone 20 times more likely to have heart disease.

Awareness is critical, as coronary heart disease appears up to 30 years earlier in women with FH than in women without it. Thirty percent of untreated women will have a heart attack before they turn 60.

To address this important health question for women, Maria Sophocles, M.D., an OB/GYN and board member of the FH Foundation, offers ideas on what women should know about high cholesterol and pregnancy.

How do I know if I have FH?

Checking your lipid levels and knowing your family's history of cardiovascular diseases can help your doctor determine your risk and screening requirements.

Should I avoid pregnancy?

"Women with FH can and should have the family they want," said Sophocles. If you have FH, she suggests your pregnancy should be co-managed by an OB and a cardiologist. American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines say those with FH should consider consulting with a doctor who has expertise in cholesterol management before becoming pregnant.

Can I take cholesterol-lowering medications during pregnancy?

Women who have FH should stop taking statins one to two months before trying to conceive, according to the 2018



Women with familial hypercholesterolemia may need extra care while pregnant.

cholesterol guidelines from the AHA. If you become pregnant while on a statin, stop taking it as soon as the pregnancy is discovered. You may resume statin medication after pregnancy. You should also avoid statins while breast-feeding.

Let your doctor know if you were on a statin at the time of conception. All statins are currently not recommended in pregnant women due to potential effects on the developing baby.

What are my options during and after pregnancy?

If your doctors want you to be on cholesterol-lowering medication during pregnancy or breast-feeding, there are options they can discuss with you.

Will my children have high cholesterol?

FH is an inherited condition, so if you and/or your partner have it, your children could be at higher risk of inheriting the condition. It's reasonable to test children for FH as early as age 2 years. Current guidelines say it's reasonable to begin treatment around age 10 if lifestyle therapy is unsuccessful after three to six months.

"The good news is FH is treatable and you can live a long, healthy life if you catch it early and maintain proper treatment," Sophocles said.

Learn more about FH from the American Heart Association at www.heart.org/FH.