

COVID-19 pandemic led to higher weight gain for Louisiana pregnancies

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The study's findings provide important information for healthcare providers to consider when monitoring pregnant individuals' health during and after the pandemic, said study co-author Emily Harville, PhD, perinatal epidemiologist at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. Photo by iStock.

A new Tulane University [study](#) found that the extra pounds people put on during the COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact on the health of pregnant individuals and their babies in Louisiana.

Pregnant individuals in the state on average weighed more during pregnancy compared to those who gave birth before the COVID-19 outbreak began, according to a new study published in [JAMA Network Open](#).

Researchers at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center analyzed electronic medical records of over 23,000 deliveries to investigate the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on gestational weight gain. They found that gestational weight gain in later pandemic deliveries up to March 2022 was similar to pre-pandemic patterns, but individuals started pregnancy slightly heavier than before the pandemic.

Appropriate weight gain during pregnancy is crucial for the health of both mother and child. However, only one-third of women achieve this goal. Most pregnant individuals experience excessive gestational weight gain (GWG), which can lead to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Every additional 2kg gained beyond GWG guidelines increases the risk of having a newborn with an excessive birth weight, which is linked to a lifelong risk of obesity for the child.

The study's findings provide important information for healthcare providers to consider when monitoring pregnant individuals' health during and after the pandemic, said study co-author [Emily Harville](#), PhD, [perinatal epidemiologist](#) at [Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).

"Since gestational weight gain impacts maternal health during the pregnancy and after, as well as child health, this analysis indicates how the COVID-19 pandemic will have subtle but wide-ranging impacts for years to come," Harville said.