

LECTURE Five:

PARENT LIFESTYLE, RISK, AND HAZARDS FACTORS AFFECTING REPRODUCTON AND FETAL DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the maternal risk factors that can contribute to poor pregnancy outcomes.
- Recognize the personal lifestyle habits that can contribute to poor pregnancy outcomes in order to encourage pregnant women to avoid them.
- Increase awareness about the maternal risk factors and hazards for the pregnant women.

1. Age (Fig 1 and 2)

Although it is safer today than ever before for most women in later age to become pregnant, there are still some increased risks associated with later-age pregnancy.

1.1. Risk of older age

Infertility: A women's body just naturally starts to become less fertile in her 30s. It may take longer for the woman to get pregnant as she gets older. Other conditions that may contribute to infertility include endometriosis, uterine fibroids (benign growths in the uterus), and blocked fallopian tubes.

Increased risk of genetic abnormalities: As women age, there is an increasing risk of genetic problems. The most common genetic disorder causing mental retardation is Down syndrome. Down syndrome is caused by the presence of an additional chromosome which results in mental retardation and can be associated with defects of the heart and other organs. The risk of having a child with Down syndrome is 1/1,300 for a 25-year-old woman; at age 35, the risk increases to 1/365. At age 45, the risk of a having a child with Down syndrome increases to 1/30. (By convention, maternal age refers to age at the estimated or actual delivery date.)

Loss of Pregnancy: A woman older than 35 has a higher risk of miscarriage than younger women. For a woman over 40, the risk doubles compared to a woman in her 20s and early 30s. Most of the time, these miscarriages are from genetic abnormalities that are more likely in women over 35.

Health problems during pregnancy: Some common medical conditions in women over 40 are diabetes and high blood pressure. Additionally, there is a higher risk of placental and bleeding problems during pregnancy.

Pre-eclampsia: The risk of pre-eclampsia and eclampsia is greater in women having their first baby at a later age. Eclampsia is a serious complication that can occur during pregnancy. It is associated with high blood pressure, swelling of face and hands, and protein in urine. Subsequently, it can impair the nervous system and cause seizures, stroke, or other serious complications.

