

## After Pregnancy?

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Obstetric medicine physicians also have an important role after pregnancy. Some of the medical issues that a woman develops during her pregnancy may need to be dealt with after pregnancy. This may be to ensure improvement of an abnormality, further investigation and management as there may be health implications for the woman outside of pregnancy. All very important information to make plans for any future pregnancies.

## Want More Information?

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If you would like more information about obstetric medicine, guidelines, research or members of SOMANZ in your area, more information can be found at:

### **SOMANZ**

Society of Obstetric Medicine  
Australia and New Zealand  
[www.somanz.org](http://www.somanz.org)

### **ISOM**

International Society of  
Obstetric Medicine  
[www.isomnet.org](http://www.isomnet.org)



## **SOMANZ**

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145 Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: 61-2-8247 6298  
Fax: 61-2-9251 8174  
Email: [admin@somanz.org](mailto:admin@somanz.org)

# What is an Obstetric Medicine Physician?



**Society of Obstetric Medicine  
of Australia and New Zealand**



## Obstetric Medicine Physicians

Obstetric physicians care for women with medical problems in pregnancy, post-partum (the weeks after baby is born) and, increasingly, in the time before a woman starts trying to fall pregnant. Some women may have medical problems before they are pregnant or sometimes these are found for the first time when a woman is assessed in early pregnancy. Other women develop medical complications later in the pregnancy. Some conditions resolve after the baby is born but need management through the pregnancy and early post-partum period. Other medical problems continue to be chronic conditions requiring ongoing management. Some conditions put the woman at increased risk of complications during a later pregnancy or life-long (even if the condition itself has resolved after the birth of the baby), and require ongoing risk management. Some conditions are common and low risk, while others are potentially life-threatening.

Most medical disorders have the potential to affect the unborn baby. This can be because the woman may need early delivery of a premature baby, the medicines used to treat the medical condition may need to be changed to prevent harm to the baby or management is required to prevent complications related to the medical disorder. Examples of medical conditions that are commonly en-

countered in pregnancy include the following common conditions in women of child-bearing age: asthma, epilepsy, high blood pressure, diabetes, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). Some medical conditions occur more commonly in pregnancy such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and urinary tract infections.

Some medical conditions only occur in pregnancy such as preeclampsia, cholestasis of pregnancy or acute fatty liver of pregnancy. Sometimes a woman's previous medical issues put her at risk of developing these complications during her pregnancy.

In recent decades, increasing numbers of women with significant risk factors for existing medical conditions have chosen to become pregnant. This has increased the need for close working relationships between obstetrics, midwifery and internal medicine, to ensure the best possible outcomes for mother and baby.

## What Do They Do?

Obstetric medicine physicians are specialist doctors that work very closely with other medical specialists, GPs, midwives and obstetricians to provide holistic care for women with medical problems.

Obstetric medicine physicians have undergone extra training to better understand the medical issues of pregnant women. Obstetric physicians offer specialized counselling to women who have various medical conditions, some of which are listed above. Ideally, this should take place before the woman becomes pregnant so that she enters pregnancy as healthy as possible, fully informed of all the issues and any risks to her baby. Some women with medical problems affecting, for example, their kidneys or their heart, have very high risk pregnancies and need to be seen and monitored very frequently during pregnancy.

Many women have concerns about taking medicines while they are pregnant and while some medicines cannot be taken in pregnancy, many medicines are safe and necessary. It is important that women know to continue

these in pregnancy to protect themselves and their unborn child. Some medicines need changing before or during pregnancy.

For women with some pre-existing medical conditions that rarely affect pregnant women, obstetric medicine physicians are likely to have more experience in caring for such women than general obstetricians.

Obstetric medicine physicians also have an important role after pregnancy. Some of the medical issues that a woman develops during her pregnancy may need to be dealt with after pregnancy. This may be to ensure improvement of an abnormality, further investigation and management as there may be health implications for the woman outside of pregnancy. This is also very important information to make plans for any future pregnancies.

