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'Too young to worry?' Science says otherwise!

How your college health checks could save your future baby

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Let's be honest — between pulling an all-nighter, living on ramen noodles, stressing over those midterms that did not go as planned and even juggling five deadlines at a time, a blood pressure check at the wellness center is that last thing that is on your mind. 'I'm too young to worry about that stuff' might be your go-to excuse. But, before you ignore that potentially annoying health check, a new research study just dropped some eye-opening news on why your future self might just thank you for going.

A groundbreaking Norwegian study of over 1 million pregnancies just revealed why pre-existing health conditions are not issues you can simply postpone. The research is focused on preeclampsia — a serious pregnancy complication that affects about 3.4 percent of pregnancies. While that number might be small, it is one of the leading causes of complications for both mother and baby worldwide. What makes it tricky? It can strike in two forms: before 37 weeks gestation (preterm) or after (term), with the former posing greater risks.

This discovery means young adults can work with their doctors to manage these conditions early, potentially preventing serious complications years before pregnancy is even considered. The numbers are striking. Having type 1 diabetes makes you 8.92 times more likely to develop early preeclampsia, while chronic high blood pressure increases the risk by 10.46 times. Type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease also showed significantly higher risks for early preeclampsia compared to later cases.

"I [felt] relieved and somewhat secure when I received these health screening reminders because it's reassuring to get information about women's health through a trusted platform like the school's wellness center," shared Althea Saceda, a second-year biology major at Mt. A.

"This study definitely helps in improving the accuracy of algorithms for the identification, management, and ideally prognosis of preeclampsia. This benefits everyone involved: clinical health researchers in the area, practitioners, and women themselves" explained Dr. Rima Azar, a perinatal psychology professor at Mt. A.

These findings are changing how doctors think about pregnancy complication prevention, by starting intervention years before pregnancy is even considered. For some students, this research hits particularly close to home.

"Checking in recent years has really helped me because my dad [does] have diabetes and I am insulin resistant which has resulted in me having PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) [...] it's helped me to understand some factors of my body and how to kind of reverse those effects," explained Veronique Mackey, a fourth-year psychology honors student, demonstrating how early awareness can lead to proactive health management.

"Having someone to rely on, as needed, is crucial [...] Even without any perceived higher stress levels, knowing that we do have a social support network we can rely on in times of need can make the entire difference," Dr. Azar added, emphasizing the importance of support systems in managing health concerns early.

Think of it like your student loans, ignoring them will not make them go away, and dealing with them early usually works out.. Only in this case you are investing in something even more valuable: your future family's health. Those routine health checks, like blood pressure screening, diabetes tests, may seem like just another item on your endless to-do list. However, they are actually powerful tools for protecting your future health.

For many university students, pregnancy might seem as distant as landing that dream job or paying off those loans. Yet this research suggests that health choices and screenings you deal with now could have life-changing implications for years down the road.

So next time you get an email from the Wellness Centre about their various health checks, remember your future self — and possibly your future family — might thank you for taking those few minutes to check in on your health today. After all, some investments are worth making early, even if the payoff is not immediate.

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