



Prince William
Health District

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Dear Colleagues,

Obtaining an obstetric history during a routine preventive health assessment can give a health care provider insight into their patient's future cardiovascular health and risk for diabetes. Having this information can help to guide a health care provider's preventive health counseling of their female patients.

As you are aware, cardiovascular disease is a primary cause of death in women in the United States. In 2011, the American Heart Association (AHA) recommended including a woman's obstetric history in addition to obesity, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, diabetes, and family history, when determining her risk for heart disease. In 2014, the AHA also included a history of preeclampsia and gestational hypertension as risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Using a woman's obstetric history can assist health care providers in deciding specific interventions on which to counsel their patients such as lifestyle changes that may help to prevent or delay the onset of cardiovascular disease in a woman at higher risk. In fact, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends that women who have a history of preeclampsia should have a blood pressure, lipid, fasting blood glucose and body mass index assessment yearly, and be counseled appropriately according to the results.

The obstetric history provides us the opportunity to educate our patients on how to improve their future health outcomes. Educating these patients on lifestyle interventions such as diet, physical activity, blood pressure control and smoking cessation should be part of a routine preventive health visit with any female patient whose obstetric history indicates she is at higher risk for diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Should your practice be interested in lifestyle intervention resources, strategies, and/or program referrals, please contact our chronic disease prevention grant team via e-mail at Kelsey.Flutsch@vdh.virginia.gov or by phone at (703) 792-6283.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Women and heart disease fact sheet.
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American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists: Task Force on Hypertension in Pregnancy, 2013

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