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Pregnant women get into the SSWinG of things at St George and Sutherland Hospitals

Women birthing at St George and Sutherland Hospitals, who are overweight – with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of more than 30 – have the opportunity to participate in a specially designed pregnancy service, SSWinG (St George & Sutherland Weight Intervention Group).

According to Lorena Matthews, Nursing Codirector for Women's and Children's Health Services, St George and Sutherland Hospitals, being overweight during pregnancy can lead to a number of serious complications, including diabetes and an increased need for a caesarean section at birth.

"SSWinG groups have been running at South Hurstville Child and Family Health Centre since 2010. The aim of the groups is to help women maintain their weight gain during pregnancy, which is achieved with the help of our expert midwives, dieticians and obstetricians," Ms Matthews said.

"To date, more than 200 women have participated in the groups and have managed to maintain their weight, which has led to a decreased risk associated with obesity in pregnancy, including gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia.

"It has also reduced the need for women to undergo a caesarean section at birth and has improved their breastfeeding initiation rate."

Women are referred to the SSWinG sessions after their first visit with a midwife and if their BMI is more than 30. At the sessions, advice and care is provided to women whose babies are due around the same time.

Ms Matthews said each group of women will meet seven times during their pregnancy and are invited to attend a reunion group with their babies following birth.

"The schedule of visits is the same as attending antenatal care sessions at St George and Sutherland Hospitals, with the added benefit of weight management; midwifery education; clinical check-ups; dietician education and support; lifestyle skills for the family, as well as support for each other throughout pregnancy.

"SSWinG is ideal for women who want to combine pregnancy care with tips on how to eat well, keep active and develop a healthy lifestyle that can be shared with their family throughout pregnancy and beyond."

Groups of up to 12 women are held at South Hurstville Child and Family Health Clinic, Allen St on Thursdays from 10am to 12 midday or from 1pm to 3pm.

For more information about SSWinG call 9547 3920 on Thursdays from 8am to 4.30pm, or contact the Antenatal Clinic at St George or Sutherland Hospitals.