

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Manager, Mercy Health

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Type 1 diabetes' support group helps expectant mums

Meagan Walsh is a healthy mum of two young children but for the past 15 years she has been living with type 1 diabetes.

"I was diagnosed with the chronic disease as a teenager," Meagan said.

"Since then I have had to follow a healthy diet, give myself multiple daily insulin injections and test my blood sugar numerous times a day to ensure that I'm as well as I can be."

Type 1 diabetes affects more than 120,000 people in Australia. However, the chances of a pregnant woman with the chronic condition knowing someone else in the same situation are rare.

To support these women, who are automatically categorised as having a high-risk pregnancy, Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg established a formal support group in August 2017.

"There are a number of extra risks for pregnant women who have type 1 diabetes which require extra tests, hospital visits and lifestyle changes," Obstetrician Dr Alexis Shub explained.

"We wanted to connect women living with the disease so they could share their unique experiences.

"The women can help each other with practical tips about pregnancy and beyond. This support group is really about women supporting women in a friendly environment.

"It's daunting enough having a new baby let alone doing it while living with a chronic disease," Dr Shub said.

Approximately 30 women with type 1 diabetes give birth at Mercy Hospital for Women each year. Since the support group was established, four women have attended each week.

Meagan said living with type 1 diabetes and being pregnant was like having a second job.

"I had to stop working as a dietitian at the 12-week mark during my second pregnancy as I was at the hospital every week being monitored for up to four hours at a time," Meagan said.

"The type 1 diabetes' support group allowed me to connect with other women going through the same thing as me and depending on how early you join — it has the potential to be like a mother's group."

Women can join the type 1 diabetes' support group at Mercy Hospital for Women as soon as they are pregnant or even pre-conception. The group is run by diabetes educators and supported by dietitians and a lactation consultant.

For more information, please visit health-services.mercyhealth.com.au/service/diabetes-endocrine-clinic or call (03) 8458 4164.

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