



9 months that last a lifetime....

During the present years pregnant women in Denmark are invited to participate in a study that will give us new information about the prenatal period and the influence it has on the baby's health. If you are pregnant and in the first 24 weeks of your pregnancy, you may participate in the study. This folder describes the project.

So much still to be discovered

During a pregnancy there are many things to consider. Does your occupation put your baby at risk? Is it safe to take medications you usually take? What is the best diet for you and your baby?

We know a lot about these things, but in many areas we are still in unknown territory. This is why pregnant women often find that they are given contradictory advice by health care professionals.

The "Better Health for Mother and Child" study will establish a databank containing information about a number of exposures that affect mother and child during pregnancy. This databank will be a major source of information for future research in preventive medicine for pregnant women and their children.

It is our aim to recruit 100,000 women for our cohort. Currently, more than 85,000 women have chosen to participate. In this way we will collect information about the pre- and postnatal experiences of 100,000 mothers – their health, lifestyle and social conditions during pregnancy, and therefore also obtain knowledge about the conditions to which their chil-

dren have been exposed during the prenatal period.

We very much hope that you would like to contribute to future disease prevention by sharing your own experiences.

What does participation involve?

- **two telephone interviews during your pregnancy.**
You will be asked questions about your health in general, your intake of medications and vitamins, your living conditions and lifestyle. The interviews take about 10-15 minutes and take place around weeks 12 and 30 of your pregnancy.
- **two post-natal interviews, when your child is 6 and 18 months old.**
The post-natal interviews address mainly the child's health and diet.
- **having a blood sample taken at your first doctor's appointment and another sample taken at your 2nd appointment (at around the 24th pregnancy week).**
- **completing a food frequency questionnaire at around week 25 of gestation.**
- **having a blood sample taken from the umbilical cord when your baby is born and the cord has been cut.**
The umbilical cord contains blood from your baby. The sampling will not directly affect you or your baby in any way.

The blood samples will be stored in the cohort's biological bank in the same way that the data from the interviews are stored in the data bank. In agreeing to participate, you agree that information about your health and your baby's health – information that is already being routinely collected by national health authorities – may be linked with data in the project data bank.

Some of our participants may be contacted several times and asked whether they would like to participate in further sub-studies. Participation in these additional studies is of course voluntary.

How do you enrol?

Participation is of course voluntary. You will not benefit personally by participating in this project, but you will be helping to improve disease prevention for future mothers and their babies.

If you decide to participate, your doctor will give you a consent form. You can also write to us or call us, and we will send one to you. We need your consent in writing even though you might already have agreed to give a blood sample at your doctor's appointment. Your mid-wife can also give you the study material. The earlier in your pregnancy you enrol, the better.

How will the information be used?

Many studies based on data from the Birth cohort have already started and more will begin in the coming years. Current projects cover topics such as pelvic pain in pregnancy, the importance of diet during pregnancy, congenital malformations, colic, asthma and allergy, cancer and many others. You will find a list of ongoing projects on our website.

It is our hope that the Cohort may help prevent some of these diseases in the future.

The answers from the four telephone interviews may later on be compared with information on the child's health.

From the blood samples, we can for example establish whether you had an infection during pregnancy, or whether there were traces of environmental pollutants in your system.

As a participant, how are you protected?

The information will be used for scientific purposes only. Neither public bodies nor private companies will have access to the data collected.

All information and blood samples will be stored without person-identifiable information to prevent unauthorized persons from accessing information about individual participants.

All sub-projects that use information from the data and biological banks must have their protocols approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency and the Scientific Ethics Committee before they are carried out. In this way, all ethical concerns will be addressed before any information is transferred to scientists.

You may withdraw from the project at any time by simply letting us know that you no longer wish to participate.

"Better Health for Mother and Child" is being conducted by the Danish Epidemiology Science Centre, founded by the Danish National Research Foundation. The project is furthermore supported by the Pharmacy Foundation, the Egmont Foundation, the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, the Augustinus Foundation, the Health Foundation and other foundations.