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Stillbirth

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Summary

In the UK, about one in 200 infants is stillborn, and rates of stillbirth have recently slightly increased. This recent rise might reflect increasing frequency of some important maternal risk factors for stillbirth, including nulliparity, advanced age, and obesity. Most stillbirths are related to placental dysfunction, which in many women is evident from the first half of pregnancy and is associated with fetal growth restriction. There is no effective screening test that has clearly shown a reduction in stillbirth rates in the general population. However, assessments of novel screening methods have generally failed to distinguish between effective identification of high-risk women and successful intervention for such women. Future research into stillbirth will probably focus on understanding the pathophysiology of impaired placentation to establish screening tests for stillbirth, and assessment of interventions to prevent stillbirth in women who screen positive.

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