

# New theory may help demystify pregnancy-related condition

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Preeclampsia, a late-pregnancy disorder that is characterized by high blood pressure and organ damage, may be caused by problems related to meeting the oxygen demands of the growing fetus, experts say in a new *Anaesthesia* paper.

Left untreated, preeclampsia can lead to serious—even fatal—complications for a [pregnant woman](#) and her baby. The new theory challenges the current view that pre-eclampsia is caused by a problem with the placenta.

"When the fetus is not getting enough oxygen and nutrients for its growth—due to conditions in the mother, conditions in the placenta or conditions in the baby—the mother makes changes in her own body to increase the supply of oxygen and nutrients to her baby, and in doing so damages her own body and gives her [high blood pressure](#)," said Associate Professor Alicia Dennis, lead author of the study.

**More information:** Dennis, A. T. and Castro, J. M. (2014), Hypertension and haemodynamics in pregnant women - is a unified theory for pre-eclampsia possible?. *Anaesthesia*, 69: 1183-1189. [DOI: 10.1111/anae.12832](https://doi.org/10.1111/anae.12832)

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