

《35岁以上怀孕妇女比去年增加30%》

The number of pregnant women older than 35 in China is expected to exceed 3 million each year between 2017 and 2020, an increase of 30 percent compared with the average level in the past several years, a senior health official said.

The increase, a result of the universal second-child policy adopted at the beginning of last year, will impose great challenges on the country's health system, Ma Xiaowei, vice-minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, said in Beijing on Thursday at a video conference on ensuring maternal safety.

"For the present and a certain period in the future, ensuring the safety of mother and baby is a heavy task that deserves no optimism," Ma said, calling for efforts to improve distribution of obstetrics and pediatrics resources.

"Surveys show many couples born in the 1970s, who were hesitant about having a second child during the initial period when the universal second-child policy was adopted, are now hurrying and preparing to give birth to a second child so they will not miss that last chance."

Although the commission did not disclose the number of pregnant woman over 35 for last year, the number of births at hospitals last year in China was 18.46 million, an increase of 11.5 percent compared with 2015.

The number of births at hospitals between January and May this year reached 7.4 million, a rise of 7.8 percent compared with the same period last year, he said.

Ma urged health authorities at various levels to give priority to maternal safety and intensify measures to ensure the safety of mothers and babies, such as thoroughly conducting risk evaluations for the pregnant to eliminate risks and improving their capacities for treatment and rescue of mothers and babies in critical condition.

Hospitals across China will add 89,000 obstetrics beds by 2020 to meet increasing demands, and the commission will cooperate with other departments to provide training to produce 140,000 additional obstetricians and midwives over the next few years, the commission said earlier.

China adopted the universal second-child policy last year, allowing all couples in China to have a second child. Of all the 90 million women made eligible to have a second baby in China with the new policy, 60 percent are older than 35, according to commission figures.

Pregnant women of that age group are regarded to be more likely to suffer pregnancy-related diseases or complications and give birth to children with defects, according to the commission.

Qin Geng, chief of women's and children's health at the commission, said at the conference on Thursday that since the adoption of the second-child policy, the demand for giving birth by many Chinese couples, which had been suppressed for many years, has been realized during a relatively short period of time.

But despite the surge in pregnancies and births, the mortality rate of pregnant women in China has not seen a significant increase and remained at 15.8 for every 100,000 in the first half of the year, due to various efforts to improve maternal services, he said.

Gu Hong, a pediatrician at Anzhen Hospital in Beijing, said the number of pregnant women over 35 received by the hospital has continued to increase since last year, posing great challenges for the doctors there.

