

Mothers campaign to dispel ignorance of pregnancy condition



Coburg's Christine Bottos, with children Aiden, 2, and Kyle, 5, aims to increase public awareness of the pregnancy condition of pre-eclampsia.

Picture: ANDREW HENSHAW N35C0301

Unveiling pre-eclampsia

Lyndal Cairns

CHRISTINE Bottos' mission is to have pre-eclampsia recognised as commonly as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and post-natal depression.

The Coburg mother of two is president of Australian Action on Pre-Eclampsia, which launched an appeal in February.

Mrs Bottos said the condition affected 10 per cent of women, usually in the second half of their pregnancy, but was little known in the community.

She said the organisation wanted to educate women about the condition by producing a community service announcement for TV channels. The group is fundraising for the announcement, information packs and phone and internet support.

"It has the capacity to become a life-threatening crisis for both mother and baby in a very short space of time," Mrs Bottos said.

The organisation said the symptoms - including high blood pressure and thinning of the blood - were often hard to spot but that

pre-eclampsia could cause the baby to grow slowly or suffer from a lack of oxygen. The only cure for the condition is delivery but it can be detected and managed with regular appointments.

Mrs Bottos said she had never heard of pre-eclampsia before being diagnosed 30 weeks into her first pregnancy five years ago.

"I was completely unaware, as most women are," she said. "My obstetrician noticed an increase in my blood pressure. I felt great but my blood pressure was dangerously high for me and my baby."

Mrs Bottos was admitted to hospital and had an emergency caesarean section to give birth to son Kyle, who weighed just 1kg. Kyle spent eight weeks in hospital but is now a healthy five-year-old.

For three days after the birth, Mrs Bottos could not see her son because the condition left her unable to see or hear and almost having seizures. "It was horrible," she said. "Those three days I was really unwell and was slipping in and out of lucidity. I was saying 'where's my baby?' and 'have I had my baby?'"

Her second pregnancy with Aiden, now 2, showed no signs of the disorder.

Mrs Bottos urged pregnant women to watch out for the subtle symptoms, which can include persistent headaches, blurred vision, and sudden or significant swelling in the face, hands or feet.

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More information is available on www.aapec.org.au or by phoning 9330 0441.