

Early origins



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The Joondalup Health Campus is investigating how childhood and adult-onset diseases can be prevented during foetal development and in the early years of life.

Known as the ORIGINS project, researchers are aiming to study 10,000 families during pregnancy and the first five years of a child's life in a bid to improve the health of the next generation through early diagnosis and intervention.

Project co-director Desiree Silva said many serious health issues — such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, obesity, allergies and renal failure — had their origins in the womb.

She said there was also a growing rate of non-communicable diseases in children and young people, including obesity, mental health issues, diabetes, autism and allergies.

“There is a pressing need to under-

stand how the modern lifestyle and environment is contributing to this unsustainable health burden,” Professor Silva said.

The project investigates how early influences such as nutrition, sleep, physical activity, electronic use, stress, pollutants, behaviour and time spent in nature affect child development.

Professor Silva said one of the current sub-studies under investigation was the use of probiotics from 20 weeks of foetal development as a possible way to reduce allergies.

ORIGINS is a collaboration between Joondalup Health Campus and Telethon Kids Institute, with funding from the Commonwealth Government and the Paul Ramsay Foundation via Telethon. About 1000 families are already involved. It is seeking more participants from its pool of families receiving antenatal treatment from JHC. Kim Macdonald

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