



14 JUN, 2019

## Heart woes begin in the womb

Courier Mail, Brisbane

# Heart woes begin in the womb

**BRIGID O'CONNELL**

OUR risk of developing heart disease in adulthood can be programmed in the womb, new research has found.

Australian researchers have discovered that inflammation in the womb, a common complication that affects one in five pregnancies and a higher rate of preterm births, worsens the development of atherosclerosis – the build-up of fatty deposits in the arteries.

Hudson Institute of Medical Research scientists say their findings in animal studies give further weight to the importance of the foetal period in setting up lifelong health.

It also paves the way for counselling parents of premature babies about the lifestyle factors their children need to address to reduce their risk of lifetime cardiovascular disease.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Tim Moss said while it had been long known that events causing inflammation – such as smoking – were associated with cardiovascular disease, it was not known how early the risk started.

“We used to think the amniotic sac was sterile, but it’s probably not,” Prof Moss said.