

gestational diabetes



my pregnancy,
my baby, and me



What is Gestational Diabetes?

Gestational diabetes occurs when your body cannot make adequate use of sugar in the blood. It is first found during pregnancy. Your blood sugar can become normal when your baby is born.

Insulin is needed for your cells to use sugar as fuel for energy. Insulin is made in the pancreas. If you have diabetes, your pancreas is unable to match the insulin it makes to the amount of sugar in your blood. This causes you to have high blood sugar.

- When your blood sugar is high during pregnancy, extra sugar goes to your baby.
- Your baby gets extra calories from the sugar and stores them as fat. This can make your baby weigh more at birth and make delivery harder.
- Your baby's pancreas makes extra insulin to handle the high blood sugar from you.
- After birth your baby keeps making extra insulin. This causes your baby to have low blood sugar. Your baby may have to stay in the hospital to get the blood sugar level back to normal.

What does this mean for my pregnancy?

You will need to keep your blood sugar at a normal level to help your baby grow well and stay healthy.

If your blood sugar is high you may develop problems during your pregnancy. The problems can include:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Delivering your baby by C-section (cesarean section)
- Bladder infection (urinary-tract infection)



What does gestational diabetes mean for my baby?

Keeping your blood sugar at normal levels while you are pregnant will protect your baby and keep your baby growing well. But if your blood sugar stays high, your baby may:

- have yellowish skin (jaundice).
- be very large (macrosomia).
- have a difficult birth that causes shoulder problems (brachial plexus).
- be stillborn.
- stay in the hospital extra days after birth with very low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).
- have breathing problems (respiratory distress syndrome).
- be overweight as a child or adult.
- have type 2 diabetes later in life.



How can I take care of my baby now that I have gestational diabetes?

Here are things that you can do to keep your baby healthy:

- Follow a healthy eating pattern.
- Talk to a registered dietitian about how to eat during pregnancy.
- Test your blood sugar several times each day.
- Exercise as your doctor suggests to help you use blood sugar.
- Take insulin if your doctor says you should.

Your doctor or clinic will help you learn to test your blood sugar and keep it at normal levels.



What else can I do for my baby?

Here are some things to do to take care of your baby before you speak with your registered dietitian.

Omit sugar and sweets. Avoid foods such as:

jams	pies	regular sodas
honey	cakes	sweet tea
cookies	candy	Kool-Aid

Instead of sugar, use artificial sweeteners in limited amounts.

Also avoid these foods:

instant mashed potatoes
instant noodles

Limit these foods:

homemade mashed potatoes		
rice	tortillas	bread
pasta	spaghetti	



Avoid fruit, fruit juice, and milk at breakfast. They can raise your blood sugar quickly. Also, do not have fruit or fruit juice by themselves. Have one of them with other foods.

Have these kinds of foods at meals:

whole-grain breads	fruit or fruit juice (except breakfast)
whole-grain cereals	low-fat or skim milk (except breakfast)
vegetables	

Have protein at every meal. Foods with protein include:

fish	lean meats	chicken or turkey
eggs	cheese	plain or “lite” yogurt

Eat small, healthy meals more often.

Have them at regular times. Include snacks so that you eat every two to three hours during the day. Always have a bedtime snack.

Avoid eating large amounts of food at any meal or snack.



Can I breastfeed my baby?

Yes. Breastfeeding is a very healthy thing for both you and your baby. It will help your body use blood sugar well after your baby is born. It will also cut down your baby's chances of ever having diabetes.



What does this mean for the rest of my life?

Gestational diabetes ends when your pregnancy is over. But women who have gestational diabetes are more likely to get type 2 diabetes after pregnancy. It is important to get regular tests for diabetes if you had gestational diabetes:

- Test for diabetes six weeks after delivery.
- Retest for diabetes every year.

Ask your doctor or clinic for the test, if the test is not offered to you.

Take care of yourself to prevent or delay diabetes. You can do this by:

- Keeping your weight at a normal level.
- Eating healthy.
- Exercise most days of the week.



My name: _____

My appointment with the registered dietitian:

date: _____ time: _____

place: _____ phone: _____

My registered dietitian's name: _____



Foods I will eat more of: _____

Foods I will avoid: _____

Foods I will eat less of: _____

I will check with my doctor about doing
this exercise: _____



Sample Menu for Women with Gestational Diabetes

Here are some ideas of what you can eat during a day. Your registered dietitian will give you more information.

Breakfast:

- 1 scrambled egg
- 1 slice whole wheat toast or 1 6-inch tortilla
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- water, coffee, or tea

Snack:

- 5 whole wheat crackers
- 1 ounce low-fat cheese

Lunch:

- 1 cup vegetable soup
- 2 ounces turkey
- lettuce and tomato slices
- 2 slices whole-wheat bread
- 2 teaspoons mayonnaise
- 1 small apple or banana
- 1 cup nonfat milk

Snack:

- 5 whole-wheat crackers
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter

Dinner:

- 1 chicken breast without skin
- ½ cup green beans or collards
- ½ cup homemade mashed potatoes or winter squash
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- 1 cup green salad with vinegar and oil
- 1 small orange
- 1 cup nonfat milk

Snack:

- 1 slice whole-wheat toast or 1 6-inch tortilla
- 1 ounce low-fat cheese

