

Gestational Diabetes



What is

gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is a kind of diabetes that some women get during pregnancy. Diabetes causes your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, to get too high. This can cause many kinds of health problems.

Food is your body's fuel. It breaks down to make blood sugar. Your body also makes insulin. Insulin helps your body use blood sugar for energy. If you have gestational diabetes, your body cannot make enough insulin or use all the insulin it needs for pregnancy. This causes your blood sugar to get too high.

Did you know?
During pregnancy
your body must
make up to 3 times
more insulin than
normal.
That's hard work!



What does this mean for my pregnancy?

Your blood sugar may return to normal after your baby is born, but it is very important to follow your doctor's advice to have a safe pregnancy.



Keep your blood sugar at normal levels to help your baby stay healthy. High blood sugar can cause:

- Bladder infection (*urinary-tract infection*)
- High blood pressure (*hypertension*)
- Difficult labor or delivery by C-section (*cesarean section*)

When you have high blood sugar during pregnancy, your baby does too. That can cause him serious harm or even death. The good news is you can take care of your gestational diabetes if you eat healthy foods, get regular physical activity, and take the medicines your doctor prescribes.

What does

gestational

diabetes mean for my baby?

Keeping your blood sugar at normal levels during pregnancy will protect your baby's health and growth.



If your blood sugar stays high, your baby may:

- Have yellowish skin - a condition called *jaundice* - at birth.
- Be born very large - which is called *macrosomia*.
- Have shoulder problems - called *brachial plexus* - caused by a difficult birth.
- Have very low blood sugar - a condition called *hypoglycemia* - at birth. Hypoglycemic babies stay in the hospital longer than babies with normal blood sugar.
- Be born with breathing problems - a condition called *respiratory distress syndrome*.
- Get diabetes later in life.
- Become overweight as a child or an adult.
- Be *stillborn*.

What can I do to protect my baby and myself now that I have gestational diabetes?

Your doctor and health-care team will teach you how to test your blood sugar. Use these tips to keep your blood sugar levels normal.

- Choose and eat healthy foods. Talk to a registered dietitian or diabetes educator about the best way to eat during pregnancy.
- Be active. Ask your doctor which activities are safe for you.
- Test your blood sugar several times each day.
- Go to all of your doctor visits.
- Do what your doctor tells you. Take all your medications.



Did you know?

A daily walk can help lower your blood sugar. Just make sure your doctor says it is safe for you.

How can I

eat healthy

with gestational diabetes?

Ask to talk to a registered dietitian or diabetes educator. Here are some things to do now before your meeting.

- Eat 3 small meals and 2 or 3 snacks each day. Eat your meals and snacks at the same time each day, and always have a bedtime snack.
- Eat protein foods with every meal and snack. Fish, lean meats like chicken or turkey, eggs, peanut butter, and cheese are all good choices.
- Choose healthy foods such as vegetables, whole grains, fruit, low-fat or skim milk, and plain or “light” yogurt.
- Do not eat or drink fruit juice, milk, fruit, or yogurt within 4 hours after you wake up. Save fruit, milk, and yogurt for later in the day.
- Do not eat sugar or sweets. That means cookies, cakes, pies, candy, regular sodas, sweet tea, Kool-Aid, fruit juices, honey, and jellies or jams – as well as anything with your own sugar added. These foods will quickly make your blood sugar too high.

- Instead of sugar, use artificial sweeteners in small amounts. These are safe to use: acesulfame K (Sunett®, Sweet One®), aspartame (Equal®, NutraSweet®), and sucralose (Splenda®).
- Do not eat big meals or snacks. Eating too much at one time can also make your blood sugar too high.



Can I

breastfeed

my baby?

Yes! Breastfeeding is very healthy for both you and your baby. Breastfeeding:

- Helps keep your blood sugar levels – and your baby's – normal.
- Makes it easier for you to lose your baby weight – those extra pounds gained during pregnancy.
- Lowers the chance that you or your child will get diabetes later in life.



What does this mean for the rest of my life?

For many women, blood sugar levels return to normal after their baby is born. But for some, sugar levels stay high. Women who have gestational diabetes are more likely to get diabetes after pregnancy. If you have gestational diabetes:

- Get checked for diabetes 6 to 12 weeks after delivery.
- Have regular checkups and get your blood sugar tested every year.
- Keep your weight at a healthy level.
- Keep eating healthy foods.
- Be active! Get some physical activity every day – or as often as you can.

Did you know?

About half of all women who have gestational diabetes will get type 2 diabetes later in life. Take action now to stay healthy.

**Protect
your health!
Ask your doctor
to test you for
diabetes, even if
she doesn't
offer to.**



Frequently asked questions

Should I be “eating for two” when I am pregnant? Because you are pregnant, eating healthy is more important than ever. But “eating for two” doesn’t mean you need to eat twice as much food. Eat smaller portions to keep your blood sugar and weight at healthy levels.

If I have diabetes, does that mean I cannot eat foods like bread, rice, or pasta? No! Bread, rice, and pasta are part of a healthy diet. Just watch your portions and pick whole grains. They give you long-lasting energy, nutrients, and fiber.

Can I eat all of my favorite foods? If foods you loved to eat before you got gestational diabetes now make your blood sugar too high, work with your dietitian. She will help you find foods and cooking ideas to fill in for your old favorites. You can eat well and be happy at mealtime.

Sample menu for women with gestational diabetes

Here are some examples of what you might eat in a day.
Your registered dietitian will give you more information.



Breakfast

- 1 to 2 slices of toast
- 1 to 2 tablespoon(s) of peanut butter
- Water, coffee, or tea (plain or sweetened with sugar substitute)



Snack

- 5 to 12 whole-wheat crackers
- 1 ounce low-fat cheese



Lunch

- Salad with 4 ounces chicken, 1 cup strawberries, 1 to 2 tablespoons dressing, and unlimited lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions
- 1 small whole-wheat roll
- Water



Snack

- 1 small apple
- 1 to 2 tablespoon(s) peanut butter



Dinner

- 2 tacos including 2 corn tortillas, 4 ounces beef, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded cheese, and unlimited lettuce, tomatoes, and onion
- 1 cup blueberries
- Water



Snack

- $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cottage cheese
- 1 cup canteloupe

Things I will do to keep my baby healthy

My name: _____

Food

I will eat more of: _____

I will eat less of: _____

Activity

I will check with my doctor before I do: _____
(name of physical activity)

My appointment with the registered dietitian:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Phone: _____

My registered dietitian's name: _____



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