

Pregnancy: Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes can develop during pregnancy. When you have this condition, insulin (a hormone in your body) is not able to keep your blood sugar in a safe range.

In most cases, gestational diabetes goes away after pregnancy. But you are more likely to get it again in another pregnancy. You also have a greater risk of type 2 diabetes later in life.

If you have gestational diabetes, making certain changes in the way you eat and how often you exercise can help keep your blood sugar level within your target range.

As you get farther along in your pregnancy, your body makes hormones that make it hard for insulin to work. This can make it harder to manage your blood sugar. If it's not possible to manage your blood sugar with food and exercise, you may also need to take diabetes medicine, such as pills or shots of insulin.

How can it affect your baby?

Even if you have gestational diabetes, you can give birth to a healthy baby. But some babies may:

- Grow too large. Babies who get too much sugar can grow larger than normal. A large baby can be hurt during vaginal birth and may need surgical delivery by C-section.
- Have problems after birth. Some babies have low blood sugar, low blood calcium levels, high bilirubin levels, too many red blood cells, or other problems that need treatment.

What should you do at home?

Here are some ways to care for yourself:

- If your doctor prescribes insulin or other medicines, follow your doctor's directions.



- Check your blood sugar. Your doctor will tell you how and when to check your blood sugar.
- Keep track of your baby's movements. Your doctor may ask you to report how many times in an hour you feel your baby move.
- Make healthy food choices. Try to eat plenty of lean protein, fruits, and vegetables. Follow your meal plan to know how much carbohydrate you need for meals and snacks. A registered dietitian or diabetes educator can help you plan meals.
- In general, it's not a good idea to diet while you are pregnant. Ask your doctor what your range is for healthy weight gain.
- Get regular exercise. Doing things like walking and swimming several times a week can be good for you and your baby. If you haven't been active, talk with your doctor before you start.

If you are able to keep your blood sugar level within a target range, your chances of having

problems during pregnancy or birth are the same as if you didn't have gestational diabetes.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You suddenly become very sleepy or confused.

Call your doctor if:

- You are sick and can't manage your blood sugar.
- You have been vomiting or have had diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You have a blood sugar level that stays higher than the level the doctor has set for you, such as 300 mg/dL for two or more readings.

- You have blood sugar that stays lower than the level the doctor has set for you, such as 70 mg/dL for two or more readings.
- You have symptoms of low blood sugar, such as:
 - Sweating.
 - Feeling nervous, shaky, and weak.
 - Extreme hunger and slight nausea.
 - Dizziness and headache.
 - Blurred vision.
 - Confusion.



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