

Pregnancy: Gestational Diabetes and Eating



Gestational diabetes can develop during pregnancy. When you have this condition, the insulin in your body is not able to keep your blood sugar in a normal range. If you do not control your blood sugar, your baby can grow too big.

In most cases, this form of diabetes goes away after pregnancy. But you may be at risk of having it again in another pregnancy. You also are at risk of having type 2 diabetes later in life.

You may be able to control your blood sugar while you are pregnant by eating healthy foods and getting regular exercise.

A registered dietitian or certified diabetes educator (CDE) can help you make a food plan that will help control your blood sugar and provide good nutrition for you and your baby.

You will need to make certain changes in the way you eat and how often you exercise to help keep your blood sugar level within a 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 and harder to control your blood sugar. If it is not possible to control your blood sugar with food and exercise, you may also need to take diabetes medicine or give yourself shots of insulin.

What should you do at home?

Here are some ways to care for yourself:

- Learn which foods have carbohydrates. Eating too many carbohydrates will cause your blood sugar to go too high. Foods with carbohydrates include:
 - Breads, cereals, pasta, and rice.
 - Dried beans and starchy vegetables, like corn, peas, and potatoes.
 - Fruits and fruit juice, milk, and yogurt.
 - Candy, table sugar, soda pop, and sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Learn how many carbohydrates you need each day. A dietitian or CDE can teach you how to keep track of the amount of carbohydrates you eat.
- Try to eat the same amount of carbohydrates at each meal. This will help keep your blood sugar steady. Do not save up your daily allowance of carbohydrates to eat at one meal.
- Limit foods that have added sugar. This includes candy, desserts, and soda pop. These foods need to be counted as part of your total carbohydrate intake for the day.
- Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol is not safe for you or your baby.

- Do not skip meals. Your blood sugar may drop too low if you skip meals and use insulin.
- Record what you eat every day. Review your record with your dietitian or CDE to see if you are eating the right amounts of foods.
- Check your blood sugar as your doctor recommends. For example, check it first thing in the morning before you eat. Then check your blood sugar 1 to 2 hours after the first bite of each meal. This will help you see how the food you eat changes your blood sugar. Keep track of these levels, and share the record with your doctor.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have questions about the foods you eat.
- You often have problems with high or low blood sugar.