

Gestational Diabetes and Your Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Gestational Diabetes

Two out of three women who have had gestational diabetes during a pregnancy will have it again during a future pregnancy. (Gestational diabetes goes away as soon as your baby is born.)

Having gestational diabetes also means you have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes at some point in your life. (Type 2 diabetes does not go away, but it can be managed.)

Keeping your blood glucose within a healthy range before you get pregnant and during your pregnancy will help to prevent problems such as birth defects and miscarriage.

About Diabetes

Diabetes prevents your body from using food properly. During digestion, most foods are converted to a sugar called **glucose**. Glucose is your body's main source of energy.

Your pancreas produces a hormone called **insulin** to convert the glucose to energy. When you have diabetes, your body has trouble producing enough insulin or using insulin, or both.

Because you have had gestational diabetes during a pregnancy, you are at a higher risk for developing:

- **Gestational diabetes.** During pregnancy, hormones that are needed for the baby's growth interfere with insulin. This happens to all women during pregnancy, but most women can make enough extra insulin to keep their blood glucose levels under control.

With gestational diabetes:

- Your body has trouble making the extra insulin needed.
- Your blood glucose levels become higher than normal.
- The extra glucose is passed on to your baby.

If you have gestational diabetes during a pregnancy, it typically goes away once your baby is born. However, you are at a higher risk for developing gestational diabetes in your next pregnancy and type 2 diabetes in the future.

- **Type 2 diabetes.** Your body is not able to use insulin properly. There is no cure for type 2 diabetes, but it can be managed with food, physical activity and medicine.

Your Next Pregnancy

Preparing for a healthy pregnancy for you and your baby starts before you get pregnant.

It is important to get your blood glucose checked before you get pregnant. Make an appointment at your clinic to have your blood glucose checked **before you stop taking birth control**.

If you find out you are pregnant but did not plan the pregnancy, get your blood glucose checked right away. You will be able to start treatment early if your blood glucose is high.

During Your Pregnancy

When you are pregnant, tell your health care provider of your gestational diabetes history at your *first* prenatal visit.

At your visit:

- You will have a blood glucose screening. During this screening:
 - You drink a sweet glucose beverage.
 - You sit quietly for 1 hour.
 - Your blood glucose level is measured.
- If the test is negative, screening will be repeated during your checkups at 24 to 28 weeks and again at 32 weeks.
- If the test is positive, your health care provider or a diabetes educator will talk with you about how to create meal plans and how to monitor your glucose.

After Your Pregnancy

Because you are at a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, it is important for you to know the signs and symptoms of diabetes. They include:

- increased thirst
- frequent urination
- sores that do not heal

- frequent yeast infections
- less energy
- blurred vision.

If you have any of these symptoms, call your health care provider to make an appointment.

In some cases, there are no symptoms at all. The only way diabetes can be diagnosed is with a blood test.

Lowering Your Risk of Type 2 Diabetes

Making healthy changes in your lifestyle may help to lower your risk of developing diabetes.

- Schedule yearly visits with your health care provider to get screened for diabetes.
- Get moving. Walking is an excellent way to exercise. Or, find something else you will do on a regular basis. Start slowly and work your way up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- Lose weight if you need to. Losing just 5 to 10 pounds can lower your risk of developing diabetes.
- Eat healthful foods. Eat fewer foods high in sugar, sodium (salt), saturated fat and trans fat. Eat more foods that are high in fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds

Visit choosemyplate.gov to learn about the five food groups, how much of each food group you should eat, and tips and resources.

Whom to Call with Questions

Call your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.