

Gestational Diabetes

What is gestational diabetes?

If your blood sugar level first becomes too high when you are pregnant, you have gestational diabetes. It usually goes back to normal after the baby is born.

High blood sugar can cause problems for you and your baby. Your baby may grow too large, which can cause problems during delivery. Your baby may also be born with low blood sugar. But with treatment, most women who have gestational diabetes are able to control their blood sugar and give birth to healthy babies.

Women who have had gestational diabetes are more likely than other women to develop type 2 diabetes later on. You may be able to prevent or reduce the severity of type 2 diabetes by staying at a healthy weight, eating healthy foods, and increasing your physical activity.

What causes gestational diabetes?

The pancreas makes a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps your body properly use and store the sugar from the food you eat. This keeps your blood sugar level in a target range. When you are pregnant, the placenta makes hormones that can make it harder for insulin to work. This is called insulin resistance.

A pregnant woman can get diabetes when her pancreas cannot make enough insulin to keep her blood sugar levels within a target range.

What are the symptoms?

Because gestational diabetes may not cause symptoms, you need to be tested for the condition. You may be surprised if your test shows a high blood sugar. It is important for you to be tested for gestational diabetes, because high blood sugar can cause problems for both you and your baby.

Sometimes a pregnant woman who has symptoms has been living with another type of diabetes without knowing it. If you have symptoms from another type of diabetes, they may include:

- Increased thirst.
- Increased urination.
- Increased hunger.
- Blurred vision.

Pregnancy causes most women to urinate more often and to feel more hungry. So having these symptoms does not always mean that a woman has diabetes. Talk with your doctor if you have these symptoms, so that you can be tested for diabetes at any time during pregnancy.

How is gestational diabetes diagnosed?

The American Diabetes Association recommends that all women who are not already diagnosed with diabetes be tested for gestational diabetes between the 24th and 28th weeks of pregnancy using the oral glucose tolerance test.¹

How is it treated?

Some women with gestational diabetes can control their blood sugar level by changing the way they eat and by exercising regularly. These healthy choices can also help prevent gestational diabetes in future pregnancies and type 2 diabetes later in life.

Treatment for gestational diabetes also includes checking your blood sugar level at home and seeing your doctor regularly.

You may need to give yourself insulin shots to help control your blood sugar. This man-made insulin adds to the insulin that your body makes.