

Controlling gestational diabetes

Gestational diabetes can only happen to women while they're pregnant. When you have diabetes, your body's blood sugar level is too high. This means your body doesn't make or use insulin the way it should. Insulin is a hormone that helps supply your cells with blood sugar, which your body needs for energy.

Gestational diabetes affects about 1 in 20 pregnant women. It often begins in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy (weeks 24 and 28) and usually goes away right after your baby is born. But some women who get gestational diabetes are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes in later years.

How does it affect your baby?

If you have gestational diabetes, your baby may get more energy than he or she needs, which is then stored as fat. Your baby also may be born very large, have breathing problems or have low blood sugar levels at birth.

What can you do if you have gestational diabetes?

The good news is that gestational diabetes can be treated, especially if it's found early. There are some things you can do to keep yourself and your pregnancy healthy.

- Follow the treatment plan your doctor gives you.
- Go to all your prenatal visits.
- Have your blood checked on a regular basis.
- Exercise. It helps your body control blood sugar levels.
- Maintain a healthy weight gain.
- Keep a log book. Write down what you eat, your workouts and your blood sugar level each day. Show your log to your doctor at each visit.

What about food choices?

They're important. Making good choices can help you have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth. Here are some ideas:

- Eat small amounts of complex carbs such as pasta, brown rice, grains, cereals, crackers, bread, potatoes, dried beans and peas.
- Eat fiber-rich foods such as whole grain cereals and breads, fruits and vegetables.
- Before you go to bed, eat a healthy snack that has protein and carbs. Try peanut butter, fruit, pretzels and crackers.
- Avoid saturated fats such as fatty meats, butter, bacon, cream and whole milk cheeses.
- Avoid sugar and foods high in sugar.
- Ask your doctor or dietitian if you have questions.

Work with your team for a healthy pregnancy

Gestational diabetes can be serious. But you and your health care team can work together to prevent and control it.

Gestational diabetes can only happen when you're pregnant. Controlling it can help you have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth.

