



Gestational Diabetes

(Diabetes that Starts During Pregnancy)

What is it?

Gestational diabetes, like “regular” diabetes, is a disorder that disrupts the way your body uses sugar. All the cells in your body need sugar to work normally. Sugar gets into the cells with the help of a hormone called insulin. If there is not enough insulin, or if the body stops responding to insulin, sugar builds up in the blood. That is what happens with diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that affects some women when they are pregnant. It happens because pregnancy increases the body’s need for insulin, but the body cannot always make enough.

How does it affect Mom and Baby?

It can make the baby get too big (heavier than 9 pounds). That is a problem, because a big baby can get hurt if it cannot fit easily through the vagina. Sometimes, the baby will not fit and the mother has to have a c-section.

Uncontrolled blood sugars may negatively impact your developing baby by causing birth defects.

Babies can also have trouble with their blood sugars after delivery, and will sometimes need supplemented with formula and maybe even IV fluid.

Can I have a normal delivery?

If your blood sugar levels have been close to normal, chances are good that you will have a normal delivery. During labor, your doctor or nurse will check your blood sugar to make sure it is not too high.

What happens after I give birth?

Your diabetes will probably go away and your blood sugar will probably go back to normal. Even so, you will most likely be monitored right after delivery to make sure your blood sugars are stable. Women who have gestational diabetes are at higher risk of developing “regular” diabetes later in life; so you should get checked for diabetes 2-3 months after delivery, then every few years for the rest of your life.

Treatment

Frequent blood sugar checks. Your doctor will order any combination of the following:

- Morning fasting at 6 a.m.
- Before meals
- 2 hours after meals
- At bedtime
- Altered diet. You will have to limit your carbohydrates. Your diet could be “no concentrated sweets”, or your doctor could order a certain amount of calories to stay under
- Oral medication
- Insulin
- Possibly insulin drip during labor

Information Use and Disclaimer:

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider.

Source: Lexicomp Online: Patient Care-Gestational Diabetes (Diabetes that Starts During Pregnancy)