

GESTATIONAL DIABETES

DEFINITION

Gestational Diabetes develops in 3-5% of pregnancies. Diabetes affects how your body is able to use the sugar (glucose) you take in. In women with gestational diabetes blood glucose levels are too high. Gestational diabetes usually occurs in the last half of pregnancy.

CAUSES

Pregnancy affects how the body processes or uses glucose. Your body digests the food you eat to produce sugar (glucose) that enters your blood stream. The pancreas produces insulin to help glucose move from the blood stream into the cells, where it is used for energy.

In pregnancy the placenta produces hormones that may interfere with how insulin works on your cells, making it difficult for glucose to enter the cells, raising the sugar levels in your blood. As pregnancy progresses the placenta produces more and more insulin blocking hormones. In gestational diabetes these hormones cause the blood sugar to rise to levels that can affect the growth and welfare of the baby.

RISK FACTORS

Age > 25	Being Overweight
Personal or Family History of Diabetes	Nonwhite race (Asian, Hispanic, Black, Indian)

COMPLICATIONS

Most women who have gestational diabetes deliver healthy babies. However gestational diabetes that is not carefully managed can lead to high blood sugar levels that can cause problems for both you and your baby.

Complications that may affect your baby:

- ❖ Excessive birth weight. Extra glucose (sugar) in your blood stream crosses the placenta, which causes the baby to produce insulin which can cause your baby to grow very large. Very large babies are more likely to experience injury during delivery and may need to be delivered by C-section.
- ❖ Preterm delivery. A mother's high blood sugar can increase the risk for going into labor early.

- ❖ **Respiratory distress syndrome.** Babies born to mothers with gestational diabetes may experience respiratory distress syndrome - a condition that affects the baby's ability to breathe
- ❖ **Low blood sugar(hypoglycemia).** Sometimes babies born to mothers with gestational diabetes experience low blood sugar soon after birth. Severe episodes of hypoglycemia can lead to seizures in the baby. If babies do not respond to feedings they may need to have an IV inserted containing glucose.
- ❖ **Type 2 diabetes later in life.** Babies of mothers with gestational diabetes have a greater risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life.
- ❖ **Death.** Untreated severe gestational diabetes can result in a baby's death either before or shortly after birth.

Complications that may affect you:

- ❖ **High blood pressure, preeclampsia and eclampsia.** Gestational diabetes increases your risk of developing high blood pressure during pregnancy. It also raises your risk for developing preeclampsia and eclampsia two serious complications of pregnancy that can threaten the lives of both mother and baby.
- ❖ **Future diabetes.** If you have gestational diabetes it is more likely that you will have it in future pregnancies. You also have an increased risk of developing diabetes later in life.

TREATMENT

it is very important to monitor and control your blood sugar to keep your baby healthy and avoid complications during your pregnancy and delivery.

- ❖ **Monitoring your blood sugar.** During your pregnancy you may be asked to check and record your blood sugar four times each day: First thing in the morning (fasting) and 2 hours after each meal. Blood sugar levels are extremely important in helping to evaluate and control gestational diabetes. Although this may sound inconvenient and difficult please remember that this is the best way to monitor the diabetes and prevent complications for both you and the baby.
- ❖ **Healthy diet .**Eating the right kinds and amounts of food is one of the best ways to control your blood sugar. A healthy diet focuses on fruits vegetables and whole grains - foods that are high in nutrition and low in fat and calories - and limits highly refined carbohydrates. The American Diabetes Association has a helpful website for food

choices and meal planning. It is important to note that making good food choices can help prevent the need for medications to control your blood sugar.

- ❖ **Exercise.** Regular physical activity is important to health and wellness. Exercise lowers your blood sugar by stimulating your body to move glucose into your cells. If you are otherwise healthy it is recommended that you exercise most days of the week (at least three hours per week) . Walking, cycling and swimming are good choices during pregnancy.
- ❖ **Medication.** If diet and exercise are not enough, you may need medication to lower your blood sugar. Two medications commonly used in pregnancy are insulin and glyburide. Between 10 and 20 percent of women may need insulin injections to meet their blood sugar goals. Sometimes, glyburide an oral blood sugar control medication is prescribed.