

What is Gestational Diabetes

Gestational Diabetes is diabetes that occurs during a pregnancy. About 7out of every 100 women who are pregnant will develop gestational diabetes. Diabetes is caused when a person has too much sugar in their blood.

During pregnancy, diabetes is caused by the increase in certain hormones that make the mother unable to use her own insulin properly. Gestational diabetes:

- Usually occurs during the last half of pregnancy
- Will usually occur again during other pregnancies
- When untreated, can cause problems such as unexplained stillbirths, large babies, unnecessary cesarean sections or sick babies who have to go to the special care nursery

The diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born, **but women who have gestational diabetes have about a 50% chance of developing type 2 diabetes later in life**, especially if they are overweight. *Therefore, any woman that has had gestational diabetes is at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes and should continue to eat healthy meals, exercise regularly and maintain a normal weight.*

ALL WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT SHOULD BE SCREENED FOR GESTATIONAL DIABETES

WHEN: Between 24 and 28 weeks during a pregnancy, every woman should be screened for gestational diabetes.

HOW: The most common way to screen for diabetes during a pregnancy is to have the woman drink 50 grams of a sugary liquid and take a sample of blood one hour later.

WHAT IS NORMAL: Blood sugar levels less than 140 mg/dl plasma value are considered normal and levels of 140 mg/dl plasma value or greater indicate the patient needs another kind of test.

WHAT KIND OF TEST?

GLUCOSE TOLERANCE TEST: The woman should not eat or drink anything except water overnight before she is scheduled to go to the laboratory. She will have a blood sample taken, drink 100g of a sugary liquid and have blood samples taken 1 hour, 2 hours, and 3 hours later. She should sit and not eat or smoke during the test.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Be sure your doctor screens you for gestational diabetes at about 7 months of pregnancy

Eat healthy food

Keep your weight at the right amount for your height

Exercise regularly after checking with your doctor (walking is ideal)

Know your risk for gestational diabetes – risk factors include:

- Overweight
- Age greater than 25
- Family history of diabetes
- Previous stillbirth
- Birth of a baby weighing more than 9 pounds
- Gestational diabetes during a previous pregnancy
- Being a member of an ethnic group with a high incidence of diabetes