

Gestational Diabetes

What is gestational diabetes?

- Gestational diabetes is diabetes mellitus that develops in women for the first time during pregnancy.
- Some women found to have gestational diabetes actually may have had mild diabetes before pregnancy that was not diagnosed.

What is diabetes mellitus?

Diabetes mellitus (also called "diabetes") is a condition that causes high levels of glucose in the blood.

- Glucose is a sugar that is the body's main source of energy.
- Health problems can occur when glucose levels are too high.

What causes gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is caused by a change in the way a woman's body responds to insulin during pregnancy.

- Insulin is a hormone.
- It moves glucose out of the blood and into the body's cells where it can be turned into energy.
- During pregnancy, a woman's cells naturally become slightly more resistant to insulin's effects.
- This change is designed to increase the mother's blood glucose level to make more nutrients available to the baby.
- The mother's body makes more insulin to keep the blood glucose level normal. In a small number of women, even this increase is not enough to keep their blood glucose levels in the normal range.
- As a result, they develop gestational diabetes.

Will I be tested for gestational diabetes?

All pregnant women are screened for gestational diabetes.

- You will be asked about your medical history and risk factors or you may have a blood test to measure the level of glucose in your blood.
- This test usually is done between 24* weeks and 28 weeks of pregnancy.

- * It may be done earlier if you have risk factors.

If I develop gestational diabetes, will I always have diabetes mellitus?

For most women, gestational diabetes goes away after childbirth.

- However, they remain at high risk of having diabetes later in life.
- For women who had mild diabetes before pregnancy, it is a lifelong condition.

Who is at risk of gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is more likely in women who

- are older than 35 years
- are overweight (greater than 200 lbs)
- have had gestational diabetes before
- have had a very large baby (greater than 9 lbs)
- have a close relative with diabetes
- have had a stillbirth in a previous pregnancy
- are African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic, Latina, or Pacific Islander

How can gestational diabetes affect pregnancy?

- Gestational diabetes increases the risk of having a very large baby (a condition called macrosomia) and possible cesarean birth.
- High blood pressure and preeclampsia are more common in women with gestational diabetes.

What are the risks to babies born to mothers with gestational diabetes?

- Babies born to mothers with gestational diabetes may have problems with breathing, low glucose levels, and jaundice.
- With proper prenatal care and careful control of glucose levels, the risk of these problems decreases.

What are the long-term effects of gestational diabetes for both mothers and babies?

- Women who have had gestational diabetes are at higher risk of having diabetes in the future, as are their children.
- Women with gestational diabetes will need to have regular diabetes testing after pregnancy.

If I have gestational diabetes, how can I control it?

If you have gestational diabetes, you will need to keep your blood glucose level under control.

- Controlling your blood glucose level may require daily tracking of your glucose level, eating healthy foods, exercising regularly, and sometimes, taking medications.

If I have gestational diabetes, will I have to take medication?

- Gestational diabetes often can be controlled with diet and exercise.
- If diet and exercise are not enough, medication may be needed to control your blood glucose level.
- Some women may take oral medications; others may need insulin.

Will gestational diabetes affect the delivery of my baby?

- Most women with gestational diabetes are able to have a vaginal birth but are more likely to have a cesarean delivery than women without diabetes to prevent delivery problems.
- Labor also may be induced (started by drugs or other means) earlier than the due date.

If I had gestational diabetes, is there anything I should do after my pregnancy?

- You should have a test for diabetes 6–12 weeks after you give birth.
- If your postpartum glucose test result is normal, you need to be tested for diabetes every 3 years.