

Gestational Diabetes: What to Expect

WILL MY BABY BE BORN WITH DIABETES?

Gestational diabetes doesn't cause diabetes in babies. However, babies of mothers with gestational diabetes have a higher chance of being very overweight and getting diabetes when they reach their teen years or early adulthood.

HOW CAN GESTATIONAL DIABETES AFFECT MY BABY?

Studies have shown that you can have a healthy baby if your blood glucose levels are in the target range. But if blood glucose stays high during pregnancy, babies can grow too large, making a vaginal delivery more difficult. In addition, they can have health problems at birth, such as breathing problems or blood glucose levels that are too low. Other conditions, such as a low level of calcium in the blood, jaundice (yellowing of the skin), and an abnormal increase in red blood cells, also can occur. Your doctor can do special tests after delivery to check for problems.

HOW CAN GESTATIONAL DIABETES AFFECT ME?

During pregnancy, gestational diabetes can increase your risk of high blood pressure and having a C-section.

Coping with gestational diabetes

Sometimes a diagnosis of gestational diabetes can lead to feelings of guilt, worry, and fear. You may feel over-whelmed by having to do even more to take care of yourself. Perhaps you're worried about the baby's health. Maybe your partner is troubled, too. If it's been hard for you to cope with having gestational diabetes, talk to your health care provider about finding someone who can help you. Think about whether you'd like your partner to come with you when you see your health care team.

The good news is that doctors know a lot about how to treat gestational diabetes. You and your health care team will be able to monitor the success of your efforts to reach your blood glucose goals.

WHAT SHOULD I TEST DURING MY PREGNANCY?

Blood Glucose Levels

Keeping track of your blood glucose levels will tell you whether your diabetes treatment is working. Some women have their glucose levels checked regularly by their health care team. Many women check blood glucose on their own, using a blood glucose meter. It's a small machine that uses a tiny drop of blood to check your blood glucose and then displays your blood glucose level at that moment. To obtain a blood sample, you'll use a device that pricks your skin. You'll write down the results of your checks in a log book and review your records with your health care team.

The closer you get to your delivery date, the harder it is for your body to keep blood glucose levels close to normal. During the last 4 to 8 weeks of your pregnancy, high blood glucose levels can cause your baby to grow too large. Therefore, by doing everything you can to manage your blood glucose levels, you'll lower the chances of health problems for you and your baby.

Ketone Levels

You may need to check for ketones, a substance in your urine. Having ketones means that your body is using fat for energy. This can happen if you're not getting enough calories or if you're not eating often enough. Ketones may be harmful for your baby.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER DELIVERY?

Your baby's blood glucose will be checked right away after delivery. Your baby may need to go to the special care nursery for observation if the baby's blood glucose level is too low.

It's important that you have another blood check 6 weeks after delivery. You have a high chance of having gestational diabetes in future pregnancies and getting type 2 diabetes later on.

You should continue healthful eating and increase your physical activity after delivery. If you are overweight, any weight loss, even 10 pounds, may lower your chances of getting type 2 diabetes.