

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Pregnancy and Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where you have higher than normal amounts of sugar in your blood. It puts extra strain on your heart, kidneys, and your unborn baby.

Diabetes (die-uh-BEE-teez) is when

- your body doesn't make enough insulin (IN-suh-lin) or
- your body's insulin may not work right.

The body needs insulin to turn glucose (sugar) into energy. If there is not enough insulin, the glucose stays in the blood.²

Diabetes in pregnancy can occur when:

- A woman already has diabetes and becomes pregnant
- A woman is pregnant and develops diabetes during the pregnancy. This is called “gestational (jeh-STAY-shun-uhl) diabetes.”¹

Planning for Your Pregnancy If You Already Have Diabetes

Your doctor and health care team will work with you to make sure that your body will be a good place for a baby to grow. Your health care team may talk to you about:

- **Birth control.** If you practice birth control, you can wait to become pregnant when your body is as healthy as it can be.³
- **Having a complete exam.** Your doctor will want to treat any health conditions that might cause problems before you get pregnant.³
- **Controlling your blood sugar.** Controlling your blood sugar will lower the risk of problems related to diabetes for both you and your baby.³ The American Diabetes Association suggests women have their blood sugar levels in good control for three to six months before trying to get pregnant.⁴
- **Meal planning.** You may want to work with a dietician (dye-uh-TISH-uhn) if you are having trouble getting your blood sugar levels at normal or near-normal levels.³
- **Getting regular exercise.** If you haven't been doing exercise for a while, start slowly. If you take insulin, test your blood sugar before and after you exercise.³ Once you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about how much and what type of exercise is best for you.



Pregnancy and Diabetes

Women who have gestational diabetes are at higher risk for getting preeclampsia (pree-ih-KLAMP-see-uh).⁵ This is when a woman has high blood pressure and too much protein in her urine. If it's not treated, it can lead to serious problems for both mother and baby.

For both you and your baby to have the best chance at good health³:

- If you have life-long diabetes, get your blood sugar under control before getting pregnant.
- Follow your special diet and talk with your doctor about exercising.

Women With Gestational Diabetes

Some women get the news late in their pregnancy that they have “gestational diabetes.” This is a term used for pregnant women²:

- Who did not have diabetes before they became pregnant
- Who have high blood sugar levels

Gestational diabetes can hurt your baby if your blood sugar is not controlled.² The extra blood sugar can cross the placenta (pluh-SENT-uh). This causes your baby's body to make extra insulin. This can cause your baby to grow too large.

A baby born to a mother with gestational diabetes that isn't controlled⁵:

- May cause a difficult birth (become wedged in the birth canal)
- May need a Cesarean section birth
- May have very low blood sugar levels shortly after birth
- Is at higher risk for breathing problems

Pregnancy and Women With Diabetes

Women with diabetes and who develop gestational diabetes can have healthy pregnancies. The best thing you can do is *keep your blood sugar in control*. Your doctor will teach you about checking your blood sugar. Your doctor will tell you the best blood sugar numbers (range) for you when pregnant.

Sources

1. American Diabetes Association. Gestational Diabetes. <http://www.diabetes.org/gestational-diabetes.jsp>
2. NDIC. What Diabetes Is. <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/type1and2/what.htm>
3. MayoClinic.com. Pregnancy and Diabetes: Plan Your Pregnancy to Avoid Complications. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pregnancy-and-diabetes/DA00061>
4. American Diabetes Association. Before Pregnancy. <http://www.diabetes.org/type-1-diabetes/sex-and-pregnancy/before-pregnancy.jsp>
5. MayoClinic.com. Gestational Diabetes. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/gestational-diabetes/DS00316/DSECTION=7>

