

Gestational Diabetes

During your second or third trimester, you may learn you have gestational diabetes. About four percent of women develop high blood sugar (glucose), because they may be resistant to insulin (hyperglycemic). This means, you need as much as three times the insulin to keep the right levels of blood sugar.

Gestational diabetes is one of the most common problems of pregnancy. It often has no symptoms. However, signs may include thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision, nausea and feeling more tired than usual. Women at risk include those over age 30, a family history of diabetes or having had a baby over 9 pounds. This occurs more often in African-Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Pacific Islanders and Native Americans. It can be treated and controlled with diet and exercise.

If it is not treated or controlled, the baby will receive too much blood glucose. If this happens, the extra sugar can be stored as fat. As a result, babies are born overweight. The extra weight can cause damage to the baby's shoulders during delivery or may require a cesarean section. Once the baby is born, the pancreas and other parts of the body will need to work overtime. This may reduce blood sugar levels to dangerously low levels. These babies are also at risk of breathing problems and lifetime obesity.

Delivery

Gestational diabetes normally does not extend past pregnancy; however, there is a 40% to 50% chance you will have gestational diabetes in future pregnancies. Women with gestational diabetes should have their blood sugar checked six to eight weeks after delivery to make sure sugar levels are normal. Sometimes gestational diabetes does not go away. This may mean that you have had Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes that was not previously diagnosed. In this case, you may have to receive treatment for diabetes.

What Can You Do?

Your main goal is to reach sugar levels that are the same as other pregnant women. Some women may need daily blood glucose testing and insulin injections. Make sure you talk to your doctor about what treatment options are best for you.

You can help prevent diabetes by:

- losing weight to help you avoid developing Type 2 diabetes;
- eating a good diet; include at least five fruits and vegetables everyday, limit your fat intake and watch your portion sizes;
- exercising to increase your use of blood sugar. This will lower your need for added insulin. Talk to your doctor about starting an exercise program.