

# What to Know About Gestational Diabetes



## What is Gestational Diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that develops only during pregnancy. Diabetes means your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Your body uses glucose for energy. Too much glucose in your blood is not good for you or your baby.

## When Can Gestational Diabetes Be Diagnosed?

You will probably be tested for gestational diabetes between weeks 24 and 28 of your pregnancy. If you have a higher chance of getting gestational diabetes, your doctor may test for diabetes during the first visit after you become pregnant. If your blood glucose level is above normal at that time, you may be diagnosed with diabetes rather than gestational diabetes.

## How is Gestational Diabetes Diagnosed?

Doctors use blood tests to diagnose gestational diabetes. All diabetes blood tests involve drawing blood at a doctor's office or facility. Blood samples are then sent to the lab. There are two types of gestational diabetes tests:

### 1. Screening Glucose Challenge Test

For this test, you will drink a sugary drink and have your blood glucose level checked an hour later. The test can be done at any time of the day. If the results are above normal, you may need to have an oral glucose tolerance test.

### 2. Oral Glucose Tolerance Test

You will need to fast for at least eight hours before the test. Fasting means having nothing to eat or drink except water. Your doctor will give you other instructions to follow before the test.

Your fasting blood glucose level will be checked before the test begins. Then you will drink a sugary drink. Your blood glucose levels will be checked one hour, two hours, and possibly three hours later. Your doctor will use your test results to find out if you have gestational diabetes.

## We offer maternity care right in your neighborhood!

### High-Risk Case Management

If you are having problems with your pregnancy, our case managers can help and answer any questions you may have.

### Questions?

Call our Patient Assistance Line at **(888) 787-1712**

TDD/TTY users can dial 711.  
Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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## How is Gestational Diabetes Treated?

Treating gestational diabetes means taking steps to keep your blood glucose levels in a target range. Targets are numbers you aim for. Your doctor will help you set them. You will learn how to control your blood glucose by eating healthy, having physical activity, and getting insulin shots if needed.

Your doctor may ask you to use a small device called a **blood glucose meter** to check your levels on your own. You will learn how to use the meter, prick your finger to get a drop of blood, what your target range is, and when to check it.

Learning how to test for chemicals called **ketones** in your morning urine or blood is something else your doctor may have you do. High levels are a sign that your body is using your body fat for energy instead of the food you eat. If your levels are high, your doctor may suggest that you change the type or amount of food you eat.

*Treating gestational diabetes is good for you and your baby!*

You can protect your baby and yourself by taking action right away to control your blood glucose levels — and help both of you stay healthy.

## Your Baby

It is important to keep your blood sugar levels in control. Having abnormally high blood sugar levels can cause serious issues during your baby's development. A concern for babies of diabetic pregnant mothers is macrosomia (or large sized babies). Having macrosomia can interfere with your chances for a natural delivery and a cesarean section delivery may become necessary.

## Knowledge is Power

If you have questions about your pregnancy, ask your doctor. You can also visit the following websites:

**March of Dimes:**

[www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org)

**First 5 California:**

[www.first5california.com](http://www.first5california.com)

**National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:**

[www.niddk.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx)

***Remember:** If you have any questions or concerns at any time, make sure you contact your doctor right away.*

