

# Your Care with Gestational Diabetes

## About gestational diabetes

Gestational diabetes is high blood sugar during pregnancy. It begins between 24 and 27 weeks of pregnancy and often goes away (85 to 90% of the time) after the baby is born.

The placenta is an organ in the uterus (womb) that supplies food to your baby. The umbilical cord connects your baby to the placenta. The placenta also makes hormones that raise your blood sugar. Insulin lets your body use blood sugar for energy. Some women cannot make enough insulin to cover the increased need for insulin during pregnancy. This results in gestational diabetes.

**You can still have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby with gestational diabetes.** The way to achieve this is to keep your blood sugar in a healthy range (60 to 120 mg/dl).

High blood sugar during pregnancy can cause a large baby, difficult birth or cesarean birth, high blood pressure, and preterm labor or delivery. It can also cause the baby to have breathing problems, low blood sugar, and jaundice after delivery.

**You can help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range if you:**

- Follow your diet plan.
- Do moderate exercise.
- Check your blood sugar and share your results with your provider weekly.

## Diet

- You will need to manage the amount of carbohydrates in your diet to improve your blood sugar levels. The best place to start is to **make changes to the type and amount of carbohydrates you eat.**
  - ▶ **Choose complex carbohydrates**, which are higher in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and often have a lower blood sugar response. These foods include 100% whole grains (brown or wild rice, old fashioned oats, barley, farro, quinoa), beans, lentils, whole fruits, whole wheat bread and pasta, as well as starchy vegetables like corn, green peas, and sweet potatoes.
  - ▶ **Limit refined carbohydrates.** Eating too much processed breakfast cereal, fruit juice, soda, and refined grain products (like white rice and pasta) can lead to higher blood sugar levels.
- **Eat 3 small meals and 3 snacks each day** to keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.
  - ▶ **Eat your meals and snacks at about the same times each day.** This will help to keep your blood sugar in a healthy range for your health and the growth of your baby.
  - ▶ **With each meal and snack, combine a carbohydrate** from the whole grains and starches, fruit, or milk groups **with a protein** or a healthy fat from the protein foods group.
  - ▶ If you eat an early dinner (more than 3 hours before bedtime), eat a bedtime snack 30 to 60 minutes before bed. The snack should have a serving of carbohydrates and a serving of protein foods to keep blood sugar levels stable overnight.



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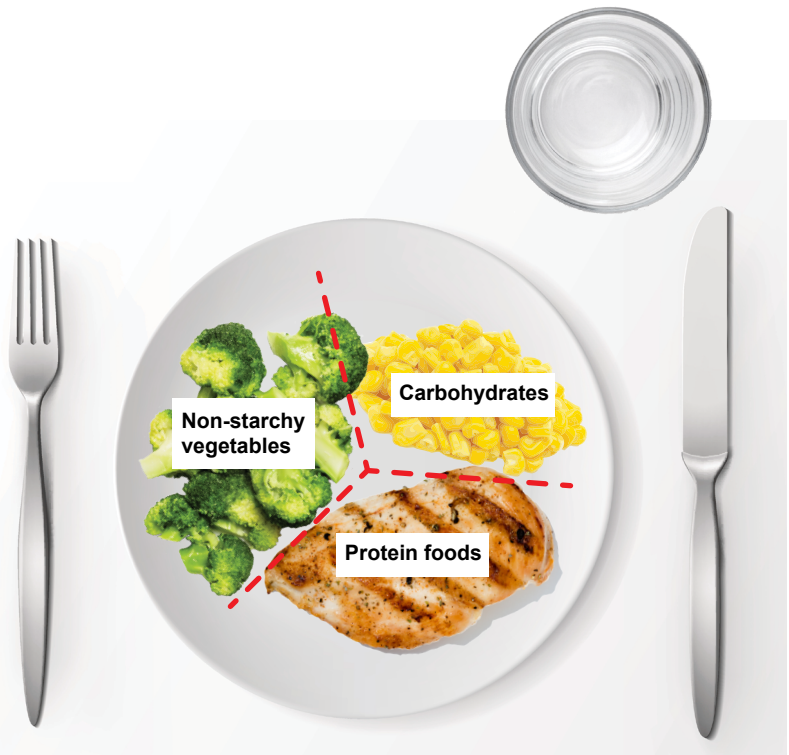
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- **Drink water, no-calorie beverages, or low fat milk.**
- Some over the counter medicines, like Tums and cough syrups, have sugar or simple carbohydrates. Your pharmacist can help you **choose sugar free over the counter medicines.**

## Plate Method

The Plate Method is a easy way to **keep carbohydrates to a moderate amount at meals** to improve blood sugar levels.

1. Divide an 9-inch plate into 3 equal parts. Fill the first part of the plate with **non-starchy vegetables**.
  - This is about 1 to 2 servings of non-starchy vegetables.
2. Fill the second part of the plate with **carbohydrates**, like whole grains, starchy vegetables (corn, peas, and sweet potatoes), fruit, milk, or yogurt.
  - This is about 2 to 4 servings of carbohydrates.
3. Fill the third part of the plate with **protein foods**.
  - This is about 3 to 4 servings of protein foods.
4. **Keep added fats to small amounts.**
5. **Drink mostly water** with your meals and snacks. Aim for 8 (8 ounce) glasses of water each day.



## Food Groups

### Non-starchy vegetables

- Have little effect on blood sugar.
- 1 serving equals 5 grams of carbohydrates.
- 1 serving =
  - 1 cup raw vegetables or salad greens
  - ½ cup cooked vegetables
  - ½ cup vegetable juice
- Examples include: artichoke, asparagus, bean sprouts, beets, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, green or yellow beans, salad greens, mushrooms, onions, peppers, radish, snow peas, sugar snap peas, tomatoes, turnips, yellow squash, and zucchini.



## **Carbohydrates (includes whole grains and starches group, fruit group, and milk group)**

### **Whole grains and starches group:**

- **Choose whole grains** (like brown rice and whole wheat pasta) **over refined grains** (like white rice and pasta).
- 1 serving equals 15 grams of carbohydrate.
- 1 serving =
  - 1 slice of bread
  - 1 small roll
  - ¼ of a bagel
  - ½ of a hamburger bun or English muffin
  - 1, 6-inch tortilla
  - ⅓ cup cooked rice, pasta, barley, quinoa, or couscous
  - ½ cup cooked bulgur wheat, lentils or legumes (dried beans or peas)
  - ½ cup corn, sweet potato or green peas
  - 3 ounce baked sweet or white potato with skin
  - ½ cup cooked cereal
  - ¾ cup unsweetened dry cereal
  - ¾ ounce of pretzels
  - 3 cups hot air popped or microwave popcorn with no more than 3 grams of fat per serving



### **Fruit group:**

- Pregnant women should eat fruit every day.
- 1 serving equals 15 grams of carbohydrate.
- 1 serving =
  - 1 cup fresh melons or berries
  - ¾ cup fresh pineapple
  - ½ cup fresh grapes
  - 1 small fresh fruit, such as an apple the size of a baseball
  - ½ of a large piece of fresh fruit, such as ½ of a large banana or large pear
  - ½ cup canned fruit in juice
  - 2 tablespoons of dried fruit
  - 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice, unsweetened



### **Milk group:**

- Pregnant women should drink milk or eat yogurt every day.
- 1 serving equals 15 grams of carbohydrates.
- 1 serving =
  - 1 cup (8 ounces) fat free or low fat milk
  - 1 cup (8 ounces) of plain yogurt
  - 6 ounces of light yogurt or Greek yogurt



## Protein foods

- These foods have little effect on blood sugar.
- Avoid meats that are high in saturated fat, such as bacon and sausage.
- **Include 3 servings of protein with each meal and 1 serving of protein with each snack.**
- 1 serving =
  - 1 egg, 2 egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute
  - 1 ounce turkey breast or chicken breast, skin removed
  - 1 ounce lean lunch meat with 3 grams or less of fat per ounce
  - 1 ounce fish fillet
  - 1 ounce canned tuna in water
  - 1 ounce shellfish
  - 1 ounce lean beef, lamb or pork (limit to 1 to 2 times per week)
  - 1 ounce of cheese (limit cheese to 1 to 2 ounces per day)
  - ¼ cup nonfat or low-fat cottage cheese
  - ½ cup cooked beans (black beans, kidney, chickpeas, or lentils): count as 1 serving of carbohydrates and 1 serving of protein foods
  - 4 ounces tofu
  - 2 tablespoons peanut butter
  - 2 tablespoons seeds
  - 1 ounce nuts



## Fats

Limit the amount of fats (oil, butter, margarine, mayonnaise, salad dressing, and cream cheese) and fried foods you eat. Try to bake or broil your foods more often.

## Sweets and Added Sugars

Try to avoid adding table sugar, honey, or other sweeteners to your foods or beverages. Limiting sweets will help to keep your blood sugar in a healthier range.

## Healthy Snacks

Snacking can be a part of a healthy diet, ensuring your body gets the energy it needs every 3 to 4 hours. Snacks that combine carbohydrates with fiber and protein and that are low in sugar are better at managing blood sugar and appetite.

### How to create a healthy, balanced snack:

1. Choose **1 carbohydrate (carb)** from the carb list below.
2. Choose **1 protein food** from the protein list below.

For example: 1 small apple (carb) and 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter (protein).

#### Carb:

- 1 small apple
- ½ large banana or pear
- ¾ cup blueberries
- ½ cup fruit, such as grapes, pineapple, or peaches
- 5 to 6 whole wheat crackers
- 1 slice whole wheat toast

#### Protein:

- 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter
- 1 hard-boiled or scrambled egg
- ½ cup tuna, chicken, or egg salad made with light mayonnaise or yogurt
- ¼ cup nuts, such as walnuts and almonds
- 1 ounce cheese

## Sample Menu

Here is an example of a **meal** with:

- 1 serving of **non-starchy vegetables** (1 cup of spinach)
- 2 servings of **carbohydrates** (⅔ cup of brown rice)
- 3 servings of **protein foods** (3 ounces of salmon)

Portions were measured using the Plate Method.



Here is an example of a **snack** with **1 carbohydrate** (½ banana) and **1 protein food** (1 ounce nuts).



## Exercise

**Exercise at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.** This will help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.

One, 30-minute session of exercise can improve how your body uses glucose (blood sugar) for up to 48 hours.



## Checking your blood sugar

Check your blood sugar:

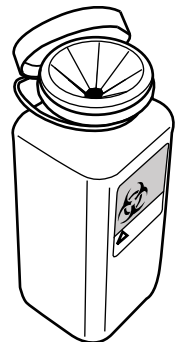
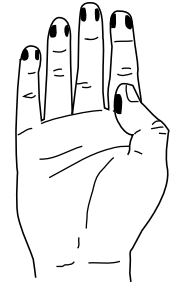
- When you first get up in the morning before eating, This is called your **fasting blood sugar**.
- 2 hours after the start of each meal.

Wash your hands with warm water and soap before you do a blood sugar check.

Use a different finger each time you do a blood sugar check to reduce infection and soreness. Avoid using the tip of the finger as this is the most sensitive area of the finger, and you may feel more pain here.

Remember to throw lancets away in a sharps container. You can buy a sharps container at a drug store or use an empty, heavy plastic bottle with a lid, like a bleach or liquid detergent bottle.

**Record the results on your blood sugar record. Send in your blood sugar record each week for review by your provider.** We will let you know your provider's recommendations the next day.



Sharps Container

## After delivery

### Breastfeeding

Gestational diabetes should not prevent you from breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding has health benefits for both you and your baby, including lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes.

### Your Care

Talk to your OB doctor about testing for diabetes 6 to 12 weeks after delivery.

You are 90% more likely to have gestational diabetes in a future pregnancy. Get tested for diabetes early in any future pregnancies.

See your primary care doctor each year for a checkup. Tell your primary care doctor that you had gestational diabetes. Your doctor will check you regularly for type 2 diabetes. 50% of women diagnosed with gestational diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. Follow the healthy habits you developed during your pregnancy to reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

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