



Gestational Diabetes: What Happens After My Baby Is Born?

What is Gestational Diabetes?

Gestational diabetes happens when your pregnancy hormones stop insulin (the hormone that lowers blood sugar) from doing its job of moving sugar out of the blood and into your cells. This can cause your blood sugar levels to get too high. If you have gestational diabetes, you will change your diet to help your blood sugar levels stay normal and test your blood sugar levels. Sometimes women with gestational diabetes need insulin shots during pregnancy.

What happens to gestational diabetes after my baby is born?

For most women, their blood sugar levels go back to normal quickly after the baby is born. Sometimes women with gestational diabetes will have type 1 or type 2 diabetes after the baby is born. If this is the case, you will need to continue taking medicine to keep your blood sugars in a healthy range.

What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes happens when your blood sugar levels are high because your body does not allow insulin to work well. This type of diabetes can usually be controlled with exercise and diet. Some people with type 2 diabetes will need to take medicine to keep their blood sugar levels normal.

How can I know if my gestational diabetes is gone?

Your blood sugar should be tested 6 to 12 weeks after your baby is born to make sure you do not have type 2 diabetes. The best test is a 2-hour glucose tolerance test. You will have a first blood sample taken while you are fasting (have not eaten or had anything to drink except water for at least 6 hours). Then you will drink a sugary drink. Your blood sugar is then tested twice more: 1 hour and 2 hours after you have the sugary drink. The results of this test will tell your health care provider if you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, if you have prediabetes, or if your blood sugar is normal.

What if I want to become pregnant again?

Two of every 3 women who have had gestational diabetes before will have it again during their next pregnancy. If your blood sugar was normal 6 weeks after your baby was born and you are not taking any diabetes medication, you should have your blood sugar tested at least 3 months before you start trying to get pregnant. This lets your health care provider know if you have developed blood sugar problems before the pregnancy. This information is important to having a health pregnancy. If you have blood sugar problems, it is important to get your blood sugar levels normal before you have another baby.

What are my chances of getting type 2 diabetes later in life?

Women who have gestational diabetes are more likely to get type 2 diabetes compared to women who do not have gestational diabetes. Of all the women who have gestational diabetes, as many as 7 in 10 will get type 2 diabetes within 10 years. You should have your blood sugar tested for type 2 diabetes at least every 3 years. If you have other risk factors for diabetes such as obesity or a family history of diabetes, you may need to have your blood sugar tested more often. Talk to your health care provider about how often you should have a blood sugar test after your pregnancy.

How can I keep myself healthy and prevent having diabetes in the future?

There are several lifestyle changes you can make to help your body use insulin better. These changes may help keep you from getting gestational diabetes with your next pregnancy. A healthy lifestyle can also prevent or delay getting type 2 diabetes.

Eat Well: Eat healthy well-balanced meals. It is best to eat 3 small- to medium-sized meals, with snacks in between. Be careful about how much you eat at each meal. Use a smaller plate and split a meal when you eat out. Fill at least half your plate with fruits and vegetables of different colors. Eat 2 to 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy a day. At least half of your grains should be whole grains. Be careful about how much fat you are eating. Drink water or unsweetened drinks instead of sugary drinks like soda and juice, which have lots of sugar and calories.

Stay Active: Exercise at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Your goal is to get your heart rate up and to sweat. Find activities you enjoy. Walk, swim, bike, or dance. You can stay motivated by changing what activities you do. Also, find a friend who will exercise with you. Exercising with a friend or in a class will help you keep exercising regularly.

Lose Weight if You Need to: Losing just a small amount of weight can be very helpful for your health. You can lower your chance of getting type 2 diabetes and heart disease by losing as little as 10 or 20 pounds. Losing weight will also help you feel better about yourself and give you more energy. You can also have a healthier pregnancy next time you have a baby. Set goals and come up with a realistic plan to lose weight. Making changes in what you eat and exercising most days can help you achieve your goals. Any weight you lose and keep off is worth it.

Keep an Eye on Your Blood Sugar Levels: Having diabetes and not knowing it can really affect your health. This is especially true if you plan to become pregnant again soon. You have a much higher chance of miscarriage (losing the baby early in the pregnancy) and congenital abnormalities (problems with the development of your baby's organs while the baby is growing in your womb). You should have a glucose tolerance test every 2 to 3 years if your blood sugar was normal after your baby was born. If the results of the blood test you had 6 to 12 weeks after your baby was born showed that you have prediabetes, you need to have a glucose tolerance test every year. Knowing your blood sugar status will help you stay as healthy as possible during your life.

For More Information

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease: Information about gestational diabetes.

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/gestational/#11>

Life After Gestational Diabetes: A detailed brochure on decreasing your risk of diabetes.

<http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/PageFiles/13947/Life%20after%20GDM.pdf>

United States Department of Agriculture: Information on eating healthy and losing weight.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/index.html>

US Department of Health and Human Services: Facts about healthy weight loss.

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/obesity/aim_kit/healthy_wt_facts.pdf

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