
Blood Glucose Screening During Pregnancy

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that only pregnant women get. Changes in your body during pregnancy can cause high blood sugar (glucose). This can cause problems for you and your baby. It is a serious condition. But it can be controlled.



Who is at risk for gestational diabetes?

You are at risk of getting gestational diabetes if any of the risk factors below apply to you. The risk for this condition gets higher as your number of risk factors increases:

- You are Hispanic, African American, American Indian, Asian, or Pacific Islander.
- You weigh more than your healthcare provider says is healthy for you.
- You have a relative with diabetes.
- You are older than 25.
- You had gestational diabetes during a past pregnancy.
- You had a stillbirth or a very large baby before.
- You have a history of abnormal glucose tolerance.
- You have sugar in your urine at the first prenatal visit.
- You have metabolic syndrome, PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome), are using glucocorticoids, or have high blood pressure.
- You are pregnant with twins or more

What happens during a screening?

Here is what to expect during a blood glucose screening:

- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) advises that all pregnant women be screened for gestational diabetes. When you are screened depends on your risk. Women are tested at 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy. Women at high risk may be tested when they first learn they are pregnant.
- A glucose screening test checks your blood sugar at the moment you're tested. You'll drink a liquid that contains glucose, and then 1 hour later your blood will be drawn to check your blood sugar level. If your blood sugar is high, you'll need to take a glucose tolerance test.
- The glucose tolerance test measures your blood sugar before and after you drink a liquid that contains glucose. You'll fast (not eat) overnight before the test and have your blood drawn. This will give you your fasting blood sugar level. Next, you will drink the glucose liquid and have your blood sugar level checked 1 hour, 2 hours, and possibly 3 hours afterward to see how your body responds to the glucose. Results can differ depending on the size of the glucose drink and how often your blood sugar is tested. Ask your doctor what your test results mean.

What to know if you test positive

Here are some things you need to know:

- Gestational diabetes can be treated. The best way to control it is to find out you have it early and start treatment quickly.
- This condition can cause problems for the mother during pregnancy. It can also cause problems with the baby during pregnancy, delivery, and after. Treatment greatly lowers the chance for problems.
- The changes in your body that cause gestational diabetes normally happen only when you are pregnant. After the baby is born, your body goes back to normal. The condition goes away. But you may be more likely to have type 2 diabetes later. Talk with your healthcare provider about ways to help prevent type 2 diabetes.

Treating gestational diabetes

Here is how to treat gestational diabetes:

- You'll need to check your blood sugar often. You can do this at home. Prick your finger and check a drop of blood on a glucose monitor. Your healthcare provider will show you how and when to check your blood sugar. They will talk about your target blood sugar level.
- To manage your blood sugar, you will be given a special plan. It will likely include meal planning and getting regular exercise. Some women need to take a hormone called insulin. Others may take medicine to help control their blood sugar.