

# Gestational diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where there is a rise in glucose (sugar) in the blood. Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that develops during pregnancy. It can affect between 5% to 8% of pregnant women.

## Who is at an increased risk of gestational diabetes?

All women who are pregnant are tested for gestational diabetes between 26-28 weeks of the pregnancy. You have an increased chance of developing gestational diabetes if you:

- > had gestational diabetes in a previous pregnancy
- > have a family history of type 2 diabetes
- > are an Indigenous Australian
- > are from certain ethnic backgrounds eg South Asian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Polynesian/Melanesian
- > are over 30 years of age
- > are overweight.

## Glucose Challenge Test

For this test, you will need to be at your doctor's rooms or hospital for one hour. You will be asked to drink a glucose solution. A blood sample is taken one hour later to measure the amount of glucose in your blood. During this test you will be asked not to smoke or drink (some water is permitted).

If the results from the glucose challenge test are above a certain level, you will be asked to have another test, called a glucose tolerance test, on another day.

## Glucose Tolerance Test

For this test, you need to fast from food the night before the test. You will be at the hospital for 2 hours. A blood sample is taken and then you will be asked to drink a glucose solution.

Another blood sample will be taken 2 hours later. During this test you are asked to rest, avoid smoking, eating and drinking (some water is permitted).

If the amount of glucose in the blood rises above a certain level then gestational diabetes is diagnosed.

## What happens if I have gestational diabetes?

Your doctor will arrange an appointment with a diabetes educator, who can give you more information about what can be done to keep your blood glucose in a healthy range. You will also learn how to monitor your blood glucose at home. A referral to a dietitian can also be arranged to discuss a healthy eating plan.

Managing gestational diabetes starts with healthy eating and regular exercise. Some women will need insulin to help keep blood glucose in the healthy range.



## Some common questions and answers

### What should I eat?

Women are encouraged to

- > follow a healthy eating plan. You may find the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating useful [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-food-guide-index.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-food-guide-index.htm)
- > eat regular meals.

A dietitian can provide you with advice so you and your baby receive sufficient nutrients while still managing your diabetes.

### Will my baby be born with diabetes?

No, but he/she will have a risk of developing diabetes later in life.

### Will my baby be okay?

Gestational diabetes is linked to a higher risk of complications in pregnancy and birth. The good news is that these risks are much lower if gestational diabetes is well managed.

### Will I be able to deliver my baby normally?

A normal vaginal delivery will be planned. Sometimes labour may be induced or a caesarean section planned. You should discuss any concerns with your doctor.

### Will I be able to breastfeed my baby?

Yes, breastfeeding is encouraged for everyone.

### Will this diabetes go away?

Gestational diabetes usually disappears after the birth of the baby.

### Will I have diabetes when I am older?

Quite possibly. Approximately 50% of women who have had gestational diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within 10-20 years. Your best protection is a healthy lifestyle and to have regular checkups with your doctor.

### How will I know if diabetes comes back?

You will need to have an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test 6-12 weeks after the birth of your baby to check that the diabetes has gone. Ask your doctor for a diabetes test 1-2 yearly. Your diabetes educator may be able to arrange for you to go on to a recall register. Have a check for diabetes before your next pregnancy.

## Where can I go for more information?

Children, Youth & Women's Health Service

[www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/other/nutrition/documents](http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/other/nutrition/documents)

National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS)

[www.ndss.com.au/living-with-diabetes/gestational-diabetes](http://www.ndss.com.au/living-with-diabetes/gestational-diabetes)

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## For more information

### Diabetes Outreach

8 Woodville Rd

Woodville South SA 5011

Telephone: (08) 8222 6775

[www.diabetesoutreach.org.au](http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au)

