



# GESTATIONAL DIABETES – A Simple Test

## 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 usually occurs during the second half of pregnancy and affects about 3% of pregnant women.



## Who should be tested?

All women who are pregnant should be tested for gestational diabetes to prevent any problems developing for the mother and her baby.

There is an increased likelihood of developing gestational diabetes if:

- you have a family history of diabetes
- you are over 30 years of age
- you are overweight
- you have had 'large' babies (generally over 4kg) or unexplained still births or miscarriages.

## **What does testing involve?**

Testing for gestational diabetes is usually carried out between 26 – 28 weeks into your pregnancy. Initially you will have a 'glucose challenge test'.

### **Glucose Challenge Test**

This test will require you to be at your doctor's rooms or hospital for one hour. You will be asked to drink a glucose solution. A blood sample will be taken one hour later to measure the amount of glucose in your blood. During this test you will be asked to avoid smoking, drinking and eating.

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**

This test will require you 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 avoid smoking, eating and drinking, (some water is permitted) and being too active.

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?**

It is important that gestational diabetes is well controlled during your pregnancy by keeping blood glucose levels within a healthy range.

This can usually be done with healthy eating and exercise. Insulin is also commonly used in gestational diabetes.

It is recommended that you have an appointment with a diabetes nurse educator. You will receive information about gestational diabetes and how you can manage it. They will also help with any questions you have.

Most diabetes education services will loan a blood glucose meter to you to test your blood glucose levels at home.

A consultation with a dietitian is also recommended to discuss how to control your gestational diabetes through healthy eating. Before your consultation keep a record of your food intake over two days.

### **Further reading:**

*Diabetes and pregnancy*, Diabetes Outreach.