

# Gestational Diabetes

BAYER HEALTH FACTS



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American Association  
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## ***WHAT IS DIABETES?***

Diabetes affects the way your body turns food into energy. When you eat, your body changes food into a sugar called glucose. Sugar is the fuel your body needs for all your activities whether it's breathing, reading, walking or running. Diabetes makes it difficult for your body to use sugar for fuel. All people with diabetes have the same problem: too much sugar in their blood. To carry sugar from your bloodstream into your cells, your body uses insulin. Insulin is a hormone made by a gland near your stomach called the pancreas. With diabetes, your body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't use insulin properly. Sugar isn't carried properly into your cells, so too much stays in your bloodstream. This is called hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar. Left untreated, high blood sugar can cause a lot of damage to your body.

## ***WHAT IS GESTATIONAL DIABETES?***

Gestational diabetes is high blood sugar that occurs **ONLY** in pregnant women who do not already have diabetes. It usually goes away once the baby is born. Only a small number of women are affected. It occurs at about the 24th week of pregnancy, when your body makes large amounts of hormones to help your baby grow. These hormones may make it difficult for insulin to work the way it should. When this happens, your blood sugar rises.

Most women with gestational diabetes have healthy babies. Still, the gestational diabetes has to be treated until your baby is born. Keeping your blood sugar as near normal as possible can help prevent problems for you and your baby.

## ***AM I AT RISK FOR GESTATIONAL DIABETES?***

You could be at risk if:

- You are overweight
- You have a family history of diabetes
- You have had a baby weighing over 9 pounds

## ***HOW IS GESTATIONAL DIABETES TREATED?***

- **Meet with a dietitian**

For anyone with diabetes, including gestational diabetes, meal planning is important to help control blood sugar. A dietitian can help you learn how to control your blood sugar and provide good nutrition for you and your baby.

- **Get enough exercise**

Exercise is important when you have gestational diabetes. Talk to your healthcare team about the best kind of exercise to do while pregnant.

- **Test your blood sugar yourself with a meter**

This helps you and your healthcare team know how your gestational diabetes plan is working. Your healthcare team will tell you how often to test and what your blood sugar goals are. Sometimes changes in your diet or exercise level are needed (see our Bayer Health Facts brochure on **Blood Sugar Testing**).

- **Test your urine for ketones**

Ketones are left over when you have to use body fat for energy. They can be a sign that your body is not getting enough sugar for fuel. Remember, when you are pregnant, you need energy for two.

Ask your healthcare team about ketone testing (see our Bayer Health Facts brochure on **Ketone Testing**).

- **Take insulin if directed by your doctor**

When you have gestational diabetes, the insulin your body makes may not be working well. Some women need to take insulin to control blood sugar. Pills for diabetes cannot be used during pregnancy.

## **HOW CAN GESTATIONAL DIABETES AFFECT ME?**

When you get gestational diabetes, some problems can occur. Fortunately, in most cases, controlling your blood sugar may prevent having these problems. Talk to your healthcare professional for more information.

**Urinary tract infections** – are more common in women with gestational diabetes. These infections are caused by bacteria, which grow better when your blood sugar is high.

**Cesarean section** – (also known as a C-section) is more common for women with gestational diabetes.

**Preeclampsia** – (you may have heard this called toxemia) is possible with gestational diabetes. If you get this condition, you will have high blood pressure, protein in your urine, swelling in your face, hands and feet, and greater weight gain.

**Polyhydramnios** – can also occur, meaning you have too much amniotic fluid. Amniotic fluid is the liquid inside the uterus. The uterus is the part of the body that holds the baby during pregnancy. Polyhydramnios can cause the baby to be born too soon.

## **CAN GESTATIONAL DIABETES AFFECT MY BABY?**

Yes, high blood sugar can affect your baby, but good control can lower the risk of your baby having problems.

**Macrosomia** means large baby. When your blood sugar is too high, the extra sugar gets to your baby. Your baby makes more insulin. The extra sugar makes your child grow bigger and fatter than normal. Macrosomia can make it difficult for you to deliver your baby.

**Hypoglycemia** means low blood sugar. If you have high blood sugar while you are in labor, your baby will make extra insulin. After delivery, the extra insulin causes your baby's blood sugar to get too low. Your baby's blood sugar will be checked and treated, if necessary.

**Jaundice of the newborn** is a condition that makes your baby's skin look yellow. It is not serious, and can happen when you have gestational diabetes. Before delivery, your baby makes extra red blood cells. After delivery, your baby's liver breaks down the extra red blood cells and gets rid of them. The waste product from this process is called bilirubin. If your baby's liver is not mature enough at birth, the extra red blood cells and bilirubin stay in your baby's body. Bilirubin makes your baby's skin look yellow. It is simple to treat in the hospital using special lights.

## ***CAN I HAVE A HEALTHY BABY?***

Of course you can have a healthy baby when you have gestational diabetes. Here are some tips:

1. Follow the instructions of your healthcare team
2. Check your blood sugar as discussed with your doctor
3. Test your urine for ketones
4. Follow your meal plan
5. Exercise regularly

## ***WILL MY BABY BE BORN WITH DIABETES?***

Having gestational diabetes does not cause your baby to be born with diabetes.



## ***WILL DIABETES GO AWAY AFTER MY PREGNANCY?***

Usually, your blood sugar will go back to normal soon after your baby is born. However, your risk of getting diabetes later in life is higher when you have had gestational diabetes. It is important to stay on a healthy meal plan, maintain a healthy weight, and exercise regularly. You should have your blood sugar checked again at your 6-week check up and regularly (yearly) thereafter.



Gestational diabetes can be controlled. You can have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. The key is making healthy choices while you're pregnant. This will help you get into the habit of making healthy choices after your baby is born. Just remember—the power to manage your own and your baby's health is in your hands.

For more information about Diabetes Care Systems and support from Bayer, or help with your diabetes testing supplies, call our toll-free Customer Service Help Line at 1-800-348-8100 (24 hours, 7 days a week).

You can also visit our web site at:

[www.BayerDiabetes.com/us](http://www.BayerDiabetes.com/us)



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