

Gestational diabetes

Other formats

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How do I keep my blood glucose levels under target?

This is different for each individual. Try the different ideas below to see what works for you.

Foods that will raise your blood glucose (sugar) level are:

- Sugars –table sugar, syrups, added to foods such as cakes, biscuits and sweets, etc.
- Starchy foods – bread, rice, pasta, potato, cereal, crackers, oats, etc.
- Sugars in fruit
- Sugars in milk products (excluding high fat types like butter, cheese and cream)

Sugars raise your blood glucose level quickly, starchy foods, fruit and milk not as quickly. Fruit juice is an exception; it will increase your level quickly as the fibre has been removed.

Your blood glucose will rise depending on how much of the above you eat. If you eat multiple carbohydrate sources within one meal you are more likely to eat more carbohydrates in total at that time. This can result in a high blood glucose reading 1 hour after your meal.

Cut out or minimise sugar

Cut out sugar completely or switch to artificial sweeteners such as Splenda, Sweetex, Canderel, etc. They do not contain any or many calories (kcal) and they won't increase your blood sugars.

Fist sized carbohydrate portions

Keep carbohydrate foods (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, cereal, potato, etc.) to fist size portions at each meal. If you have more than one carbohydrate still keep to a fist size portion in total.

Choose wholegrain

A switch to wholegrain foods will slow how quickly your blood glucose level increases. Examples of switches:

White bread → Seeded or granary bread

White rice → Brown rice

Instant porridge sachet → Whole oats

Mashed potato → New potatoes with skin

Weetabix or cornflakes → Muesli (limit dried fruit)

Plate proportions

Plate portions: $\frac{1}{2}$ a plate of vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ of your protein source (beans, fish, soya, eggs, chicken, meat, etc.) and $\frac{1}{4}$ a plate of starchy food.

Split your meals

If you get hungry between meals and struggle to keep your after mealtime readings low enough, try splitting what you have at a meal to save some as a snack between meals (e.g. if you usually have a sandwich and crisps at lunchtime save the crisps for mid-afternoon snack).

Fill up on these

Protein foods, vegetables (due to the fibre) and healthy fats (nuts, seeds, olive or rapeseed oil, oily fish, avocado etc.) will not increase your blood glucose levels. However, aim to add more protein and fibre than fat to avoid unnecessary weight gain.

Limit the carbohydrates

If the above ideas aren't enough to keep your levels down you can try further limiting the carbohydrates you have. It isn't advised to do this at each meal, look for the trend. If your levels are always raised after breakfast but fine after lunch and the evening meal try limiting the carbohydrate in your breakfast. Ask your dietitian for guidance.

Drink plenty

Keep hydrated with no or low sugar containing fluids such as water, no added sugar squash, teas and coffees (decaffeinated as required) to help your body function. It can help keep blood sugar levels down and flush out some excess sugar.

Move after meals

Unless medically advised against it or if it causes you pain, keeping active can help reduce blood glucose levels. Try targeting more gentle activity (such as walking) to after mealtimes to help keep those one hour readings under target.

Gestational diabetes

What is it?

This is a form of diabetes that usually starts in the second or third trimester of pregnancy (after the first 12 weeks). It happens when the body cannot control its own blood glucose (sugar) levels properly and is thought to arise due to the effect of pregnancy hormones which block the action of insulin.

Insulin is a hormone that is produced by the pancreas and controls the amount of glucose in the blood. Insulin is essential as it helps glucose (from food and drinks) to enter all cells and muscles to make energy.

What is the treatment?

80% of women can control their levels through diet and physical activity alone, see over sheet for ideas. However, some women may require tablets or insulin injections in order to control their blood glucose levels.

How do I test my blood glucose levels?

You will be taught by a diabetes specialist nurse or diabetes specialist dietitian how to do this. They will also provide you with any equipment required in order to do this.

Can I breastfeed my baby?

Yes, gestational diabetes does not affect this. Colostrum harvesting can be beneficial – speak to your midwife if you would like to learn more.

What happens after delivery?

You will be provided with an individual delivery plan closer to the expected date of your delivery. This is to make sure it is accurate and in keeping with your level of treatment at the time.

What happens in the future?

Those who are diagnosed with Gestational Diabetes have an increased risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes in later life. You will be screened for this by your GP following your pregnancy. You can also keep an eye out for symptoms such as needing to urinate more often, excessive thirst or a dry mouth. It is recommended you follow lifestyle guidance to reduce your risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes. If you would like support with this feel free to ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian.

Useful contacts

Poe Budge (lead clinical nurse specialist in diabetes) Tel: 01271 349105
Email: pbudge@nhs.net

Naomi Lewis (diabetes specialist dietitian) Tel: 01271 349124
Email: naomi.lewis3@nhs.net

Antenatal Clinic Tel: 01271 322600

Useful websites

www.diabetes.org.uk

[NHS Eatwell Guide](#)

www.bda.uk.com

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly

www.nhs.uk/conditions/gestational-diabetes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

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Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net