

The Risks of Diabetes

Diabetes that's not controlled when you are pregnant can cause health problems for you and your baby. These risks depend on the type of diabetes you have. **Gestational diabetes** first occurs during pregnancy. **Pregestational diabetes** occurs before pregnancy. Your healthcare team will explain how diabetes may affect you and your baby. You'll also learn how to control this disease. "If it's controlled, you and your baby will likely be healthy".



Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes that's not controlled can cause your baby to grow too large before birth. You may then need a **cesarean section** (surgical delivery) to have your baby. Gestational diabetes often goes away soon after you give birth. But you are also at greater risk of having diabetes later in life.

Pregestational Diabetes

Pregestational diabetes that's not controlled can cause your baby to be born too small. Your baby is also at greater risk of having birth defects or being stillborn. If you have diabetes, talk with your doctor before becoming pregnant.

You Can Stay Healthy

You have a big role to play in diabetes control. Work closely with your healthcare team. You can learn the lifestyle changes and treatments that can help ensure your health and your baby's health, too.



Diabetes and Pregnancy

Taking Steps Toward a Healthier Pregnancy



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This brochure is not intended as a substitute for professional dental care.

Controlling Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease where your body can't control **glucose** (sugar) levels. Your body may not make enough **insulin** (a substance that keeps blood sugar levels normal). Or, your body may not respond to its own insulin. No matter what the cause, you need to control diabetes. This can limit health problems for you and your baby.

A Team Approach

You and your healthcare team all play a role in diabetes control. Work with your doctor, nurses, dietitian, and others to find the treatment that's best for you.

Checking Your Blood Sugar

Your blood sugar will be tested at weeks 26 to 28 of pregnancy. If this test shows that you have diabetes, you'll need to check your glucose levels regularly. You may need to do this at home by pricking your finger and testing a drop of blood on a **glucose monitor**. This device measures your blood sugar levels.



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Eating Healthy Foods

Diabetes control begins with eating low-sugar, low-fat foods. You also need to eat meals and snacks on a schedule. Here are some foods that can help control diabetes:

- Whole-grain breads and cereals
- Pasta and beans
- Fish and skinless, white-meat poultry
- Fresh vegetables

Certain foods raise blood sugar. Avoid them. They include candy and other sweets. Also avoid juices, fruit, and some starches, such as white rice. Your healthcare team will explain the details to you.

If You Need Insulin Injections

With pregestational diabetes, you'll need to inject yourself with insulin. While on insulin, you must stop taking all pills that control blood sugar. In some cases of gestational diabetes, lifestyle changes alone won't lower blood sugar. If this is true for you, you'll need to inject insulin. This won't harm your baby.

Staying Active

Staying active each day does more than help control your blood sugar. It also helps make your heart and body stronger. You can try:

- Swimming
- Doing low-impact or water aerobics
- Walking



When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor or others on your health care team if you notice any of these:

- Blood sugar readings that are not normal
- Decreases in your baby's movement
- Bleeding
- Contractions