

Fact Sheet

Eating well with gestational diabetes

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Eating well with gestational diabetes

An important part of managing gestational diabetes is managing your diet. Following a healthy eating plan will assist in:

- managing blood glucose levels within the desired target range advised by your doctor or caregiver
- providing adequate nutrition for you and your growing baby
- achieving appropriate weight changes during your pregnancy.

It is advisable to see an Accredited Dietitian to work out a meal plan that is appropriate for you and your growing baby.

Guide for healthy eating during pregnancy

Women with gestational diabetes are encouraged to:

- eat small amounts often to help maintain a desired healthy weight
- include some carbohydrate in every meal and snack (e.g. Multigrain bread, bulgur, pasta, potato, lentils, chickpeas, beans)
- choose foods that are varied and enjoyable, this will provide you with the nutrients you require during your pregnancy. Foods such as: calcium (e.g. Milk and cheese), iron (e.g. Red meat, chicken and fish), folic acid (e.g. Dark green leafy vegetables lightly cooked, low in fat, particularly saturated fat (e.g. use oils such as canola, olive and polyunsaturated oils and margarines and use lean meats such as skinless chicken and low fat dairy foods)
- foods high in fibre
- avoid foods and drinks which may contain large amounts of sugar



- basmati or doongara rices – these have a lower glycaemic index and will help you to stay fuller for longer

See a dietitian who can provide expert advice on the proper nutrients for you and your baby.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate foods are broken down into glucose and used for energy. To help manage your blood glucose levels, it is important to spread your carbohydrate foods over three small meals and 2-3 snacks each day.

Foods that contain carbohydrate include:

- multigrain breads and breakfast cereals
- pasta, rice (preferably Basmati or Doongara) and noodles
- potato (in moderation), sweet potato and corn
- legumes such as baked beans, red kidney beans and lentils
- fruits
- milks and yoghurts.

Carbohydrate foods to stay away from are :

- sucrose (table sugar)
- soft drinks, cordials, fruit juices
- lollies, cakes and biscuits.

In some instances, you may be eating the right amount (and type) of carbohydrate foods for your body, but still have high blood glucose levels. If this happens, it is important to talk to the experts.

Fact Sheet

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Fat

Try to limit the amount of fat you eat, particularly saturated fat. Use desired healthy fats like canola, olive, polyunsaturated oils, margarines, avocados and unsalted nuts are recommended.

To limit your saturated fat intake, select lean meats, skinless chicken and low-fat dairy foods and avoid takeaway and processed foods.

Protein

Include two small serves of protein each day as protein is important for the growth of your baby and a healthy mum.

Protein foods include:

- lean meat, skinless chicken
- fish, eggs and reduced fat cheese.

Foods which do not directly affect your blood but glucose levels but are important source of protein are:

- milk, yoghurts, custards
- legumes (beans, lentils, and chickpeas)

Calcium & iron

Your calcium and iron requirements increase during pregnancy. Try to include 2-3 serves of low fat calcium rich foods each day such as, milk, yoghurt and cheese.

The iron from red meat, chicken and fish is readily absorbed. However, if you are a vegetarian or do not eat these foods regularly, an iron supplement or pregnancy multivitamin may be recommended. Discuss this with your care giver.

Other dietary considerations

Nutritious foods that will not cause excess weight gain or cause your blood glucose levels to increase can be eaten freely. These foods include

- fruits such as strawberries, passionfruit, lemons, limes
- all vegetables (except potato, corn, sweet potato, taro, beans, lentils and chickpeas). Try to include at least 2 cups of vegetables each day.

Drinks

The best drink for your body is water, plain mineral water and soda water – try it with fresh lemon or lime for something different. 'Diet' or sugar-free drinks are also suitable for people with diabetes.

Alternative sweeteners

The use of intense sweeteners by people with diabetes is preferable so use of natural sugars is recommended.

Keeping active with gestational diabetes

For women with gestational diabetes, moderate physical activity can help to manage blood glucose levels.

Benefits of keeping active

Physical activity helps to reduce insulin resistance. Regular moderate exercise, like walking, helps to increase fitness and prepares you for the birth of your baby.

Physical activity also helps to lower blood glucose levels and keep them under control. It's never too late to start moving, and there are many ways that you can keep active as a part of your everyday routine.

Remember, before starting or continuing any form of physical activity, always check with your care giver.

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How to walk more each day

Below are some tips on how you can incorporate more walking into your life. It is important never to exert yourself.

- Walk to the local shops instead of driving.
- Start a 'walking group' with family or friends, meeting at a regular time and day. This will help make sure you're committed and help you stay in touch with your loved ones.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Stand and move while on the phone.
- Gardening.
- Buy a 'pedometer' (or a 'step counter') - a small device you can clip to yourself that counts your daily steps. This will help you measure just how much walking you're doing.

We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

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