

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Gestational diabetes is usually managed through nutrition, exercise, and close blood sugar monitoring. Some women also need to take insulin, but this is the last resort.

The goals of your nutrition meal plan are...

1. To keep your blood sugar level in control. That means a fasting level of 70-95 mg/dL, a 1-hour post-meal level of ≤ 140 mg/dL and a 2-hour post-meal level of ≤ 120 mg/dL. **AND**
2. To allow for slow and steady weight gain during your pregnancy. That means 2-4 pounds in the first trimester and about 1 pound per week thereafter (for normal weight women).

Basic principles of the meal plan...

Eat 3 small meals and 3 small snacks every day, with at least 2 hours between each. This will prevent rapid and large rises in your blood sugar due to consuming too much food at one time.

Eat smaller portions of high carbohydrate foods at each meal and snack. These foods have the greatest effect on blood sugar levels and, therefore, should be evenly distributed in smaller amounts throughout the day.

Foods high in carbohydrate can be classified in two groups: 1) *added* sugars and *refined/processed* starches and 2) *naturally-occurring* sugars and *whole/unprocessed* starches.

- Try to avoid foods and beverages with a lot of *added* sugars (table sugar, honey, syrup, jam, candy, cookies, donuts, cake, ice cream, regular soda, and fruit drinks) and *refined/processed* starches (white bread products, white rice, French fried potatoes). These foods are very concentrated sources of carbohydrate and provide little if any vitamins and minerals (which are important for you and your growing baby). In addition, they are generally low in fiber and have a high glycemic index (meaning they cause a rapid rise in your blood sugar levels after you eat them).
- Most of the time, choose foods in their *natural, whole* form (100% whole grain breads/cereals, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, beans, peas, corn, whole pieces of fruit, low fat milk, and plain unsweetened yogurt). These foods generally provide many vitamins and minerals, are higher in fiber, and have a lower glycemic index.

Pay close attention to your morning meal, since blood sugar levels are highest at this time of day. It's recommended that this meal be slightly smaller than the others and contain less carbohydrate. At this meal, try to avoid cold processed cereals, fruit, and fruit juices; and limit milk or plain yogurt to 1/2 cup.

Include a protein-rich food with most meals and snacks. Good sources of protein are lean meats (round and loin cuts), skinless chicken or turkey breast, fish, eggs, low fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, natural peanut butter, tofu and other soy products, and beans.

Enjoy a wide variety of deep-colored vegetables. They are low in calories and carbohydrates, but packed with healthy vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and fiber.

Use small amounts of added fats (butter, margarine, oil, salad dressings, and mayonnaise). These foods are very concentrated in calories and can contribute to excessive weight gain. It's best to steam, broil, bake, or microwave your foods (without fat), and avoid frying.

- NOTE: For a healthier heart, choose mostly unsaturated fats (canola and olive oils, avocados, and nuts). Avoid or limit saturated and trans fats (like butter, lard, coconut and palm oils, stick margarines, and processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils).

Set a goal to walk for 20 minutes after each meal or 30-60 minutes each day. Start out slowly and work up in duration and intensity. Always talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.