



Definition & Facts of Gestational Diabetes

What is gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that develops during pregnancy. Diabetes means your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Too much glucose in your blood is not good for you or your baby.

Gestational diabetes is usually diagnosed in the 24th to 28th week of pregnancy. Managing your gestational diabetes can help you and your baby stay healthy. You can protect your own and your baby's health by taking action right away to [manage your blood glucose levels](#).

How can gestational diabetes affect my baby?

High blood glucose levels during pregnancy can cause problems for your baby, such as

- being born too early
- weighing too much, which can make delivery difficult and injure your baby
- having low blood glucose, also called [hypoglycemia](#), right after birth
- having breathing problems

High blood glucose also can increase the chance that you will have a [miscarriage](#) [NIH](#) or a stillborn baby.¹ Stillborn means the baby dies in the womb during the second half of pregnancy.

Your baby also will be more likely to become [overweight](#) and develop [type 2 diabetes](#) as he or she gets older.

How can gestational diabetes affect me?

If you have gestational diabetes, you are more likely to develop preeclampsia, which is when you develop [high blood pressure](#) and too much [protein](#) in your urine during the second half of pregnancy.

Preeclampsia can cause serious or life-threatening problems for you and your baby. The only cure for preeclampsia is to give birth. If you have preeclampsia and have reached 37 weeks of pregnancy, your doctor may want to deliver your baby early. Before 37 weeks, you and your doctor may consider other options to help your baby develop as much as possible before he or she is born. [Learn more about preeclampsia](#) [NIH](#).

Gestational diabetes may increase your chance of having a [cesarean section](#) [NIH](#), also called a C-section, because your baby may be large. A C-section is major surgery.

If you have gestational diabetes, you are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life. Over time, having too much glucose in your blood can cause health problems such as [diabetic retinopathy](#), heart disease, kidney disease, and nerve damage. You can take steps to help [prevent or delay type 2 diabetes](#).

References

[1] ACOG Committee on Practice Bulletins. ACOG practice bulletin. Clinical management guidelines for obstetrician–gynecologists. Number 60, March 2005. Pregestational diabetes mellitus. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2005;105(3):675–685. Reaffirmed 2014: www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Practice-Bulletins-List [↗](#)

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