

Understanding Glucose Screening in Pregnancy

Glucose screening is a simple test done during pregnancy. It checks how your body handles sugar. Sugar, also called glucose, is your body's main source of energy. During pregnancy, some people have higher sugar levels. This can lead to a condition called gestational diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is a kind of diabetes that happens only during pregnancy. It means your body is having trouble using sugar the right way. This can affect your health and your baby's health. The good news is, it can be managed with care.



During glucose screening, you will drink a sugary drink and have 1 or more blood tests.

Why Does Gestational Diabetes Happen?

When you are pregnant, your body makes extra hormones to help the baby grow. These hormones can sometimes make it harder for your body to use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that helps sugar move from your blood into your cells for energy. When your body does not use insulin well, your blood sugar goes up.

Who Is at Risk?

Anyone can get gestational diabetes, but you may be at higher risk if you:

- Are 35 or older
- Have a parent, sister, or brother with diabetes
- Are overweight or gained weight quickly
- Had a big baby, over 9 pounds, in the past
- Had gestational diabetes before
- Are part of a group more likely to get diabetes, such as African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, or Asians

How Is the Test Done?

Glucose screening is usually done between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy. Your care team may test you earlier if you are at high risk.

There are 2 main types of tests:

1-Hour Glucose Challenge Test

- You drink a liquid that contains a specific amount of glucose.
- After 1 hour, your blood is tested.
- If your blood sugar is high, you may need a second test.

3-Hour Glucose Tolerance Test, if Needed

- You do not eat before the test.
- Your blood is tested before you drink the glucose drink and every hour after for 3 hours.
- If 2 or more results out of the 4 are high, you may have gestational diabetes.

Treatment

If your blood sugar was higher than normal, it means your body needs some help managing sugar.

Your care team may ask you to:

- Check your blood sugar at home.

- Eat healthy foods and follow a meal plan.
- Exercise safely.
- Take medicine, such as insulin, during pregnancy if needed.

With good care, most people with gestational diabetes have healthy babies.

Possible Complications

If gestational diabetes is not treated, it can lead to:

- The baby growing too big, which can make birth harder
- High blood pressure during pregnancy
- Early birth
- Low blood sugar in the baby after birth
- Higher risk of type 2 diabetes later for both you and your child

Prevention Tips

You cannot always prevent gestational diabetes, but you can lower your risk by:

- **Eating healthy:** Choose fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.
- **Staying active:** Walk or move your body each day, unless your care team tells you not to.
- **Gaining weight slowly:** Follow your care team's advice on weight during pregnancy.
- **Getting early care:** Go to all prenatal visits. If you have questions, ask your care team.

Questions for Your Care Team

- What should I eat to help keep my sugar levels normal?
- Will I need to check my blood sugar at home?
- What happens if my blood sugar stays high?



- Will gestational diabetes go away after I give birth?
- How can I lower my chances of getting diabetes in the future?

Thank You for Choosing Us

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We are here to support you and want you to feel your best. Contact us with any questions.

IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

Last updated May 2025