



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Gestational diabetes diet

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007430.htm

Gestational diabetes diet

Gestational diabetes is high blood sugar (glucose) that starts during pregnancy. Eating a balanced, healthy diet can help you manage gestational diabetes. The diet recommendations that follow are for women with gestational diabetes who do NOT take insulin.

Recommendations

For a balanced diet, you need to eat a variety of healthy foods. Reading food labels can help you make healthy choices when you shop.

If you are a vegetarian or on a special diet, talk with your health care provider to make sure you're getting a balanced diet.

In general, you should eat:

- Plenty of whole fruits and vegetables
- Moderate amounts of lean proteins and healthy fats
- Moderate amounts of whole grains, such as bread, cereal, pasta, and rice, plus starchy vegetables, such as corn and peas
- Fewer foods that have a lot of sugar, such as soft drinks, fruit juices, and pastries

You should eat three small- to moderate-sized meals and one or more snacks each day. Do not skip meals and snacks. Keep the amount and types of food (carbohydrates, fats, and proteins) about the same from day to day. This can help you keep your blood sugar stable.

CARBOHYDRATES

- Less than half the calories you eat should come from carbohydrates.
- Most carbohydrates are found in starchy or sugary foods. They include bread, rice, pasta, cereal, potatoes, peas, corn, fruit, fruit juice, milk, yogurt, cookies, candy, soda, and other sweets.
- High-fiber, whole-grain carbohydrates are healthy choices. These types of carbohydrates are called complex carbohydrates.
- Try to avoid eating simple carbohydrates, such as potatoes, french-fries, white rice, candy, soda, and other sweets. This is because they cause your blood sugar to rise quickly after you eat such foods.
- Vegetables are good for your health and your blood sugar. Enjoy lots of them.

- Carbohydrates in food are measured in grams. You can learn to count the amount of carbohydrates in the foods that you eat.

GRAINS, BEANS, AND STARCHY VEGETABLES

Eat 6 or more servings a day. One serving equals:

- 1 slice bread
- 1 ounce (28 grams) ready-to-eat cereal
- 1/2 cup (105 grams) cooked rice or pasta
- 1 English muffin

Choose foods loaded with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and healthy carbohydrates. They include:

- Whole-grain breads and crackers
- Whole grain cereals
- Whole grains, such as barley or oats
- Beans
- Brown or wild rice
- Whole-wheat pasta
- Starchy vegetables, such as corn and peas

Use whole-wheat or other whole-grain flours in cooking and baking. Eat more low-fat breads, such as tortillas, English muffins, and pita bread.

VEGETABLES

Eat 3 to 5 servings a day. One serving equals:

- 1 cup (340 grams) leafy, green vegetables
- 1 cup (340 grams) cooked or chopped raw leafy vegetables
- 3/4 cup (255 grams) vegetable juice
- 1/2 cup (170 grams) of chopped vegetables, cooked or raw

Healthy vegetable choices include:

- Fresh or frozen vegetables without added sauces, fats, or salt
- Dark green and deep yellow vegetables, such as spinach, broccoli, romaine lettuce, carrots, and peppers

FRUITS

Eat 2 to 4 servings a day. One serving equals:

- 1 medium whole fruit (such as a banana, apple, or orange)
- 1/2 cup (170 grams) chopped, frozen, cooked, or canned fruit

- 3/4 cup (180 milliliters) fruit juice

Healthy fruit choices include:

- Whole fruits rather than juices. They have more fiber.
- Citrus fruits, such as oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines.
- Fruit juices without added sugar.
- Fresh fruits and juices. They are more nutritious than frozen or canned varieties.

MILK AND DAIRY

Eat 4 servings of low-fat or nonfat dairy products a day. One serving equals:

- 1 cup (240 milliliters) milk or yogurt
- 1 1/2 oz (42 grams) natural cheese
- 2 oz (56 grams) processed cheese

Healthy dairy choices include:

- Low-fat or nonfat milk or yogurt. Avoid yogurt with added sugar or artificial sweeteners.
- Dairy products are a great source of protein, calcium, and phosphorus.

PROTEIN (MEAT, FISH, DRY BEANS, EGGS, AND NUTS)

Eat 2 to 3 servings a day. One serving equals:

- 2 to 3 oz (55 to 84 grams) cooked meat, poultry, or fish
- 1/2 cup (170 grams) cooked beans
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons (30 grams) peanut butter

Healthy protein choices include:

- Fish and poultry. Remove the skin from chicken and turkey.
- Lean cuts of beef, veal, pork, or wild game.
- Trim all visible fat from meat. Bake, roast, broil, grill, or boil instead of frying. Foods from this group are excellent sources of B vitamins, protein, iron, and zinc.

SWEETS

- Sweets are high in fat and sugar, so limit how often you eat them. Keep portion sizes small.
- Even sugar-free sweets may not be the best choice. This is because they may not be free of carbohydrates or calories.
- You also may want to avoid artificial sweeteners, as they can negatively affect your gut bacteria. However, so far, no harm has been shown due to this change.

- Ask for extra spoons or forks and split your dessert with others.

FATS

In general, you should limit your intake of fatty foods.

- Go easy on butter, margarine, salad dressing, cooking oil, and desserts.
- Avoid fats high in saturated fat such as hamburger, cheese, bacon, and butter.
- Don't cut fats and oils from your diet entirely. They provide energy for growth and are essential for baby's brain development.
- Choose healthy oils, such as canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil, and safflower oil. Include nuts, avocados, and olives.

OTHER LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Your provider may also suggest a safe exercise plan. Walking is usually the easiest type of exercise, but swimming or other low-impact exercises can work just as well. Exercise can help you keep your blood sugar in control.

YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM IS THERE TO HELP YOU

In the beginning, meal planning may be overwhelming. But it will get easier as you gain more knowledge about foods and their effects on your blood sugar. If you're having problems with meal planning, talk with your health care team. They are there to help you.

Alternative Names

Gestational diabetes diet

References

ACOG Practice Bulletin No. 190: Gestational diabetes mellitus. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2018;131(2):e49-e64. PMID: 29370047 pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29370047/ [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29370047/].

Blickstein I, Perlman S, Hazan Y, Shinwell ES. Pregnancy complicated by diabetes mellitus. In: Martin RJ, Fanaroff AA, Walsh MC, eds. *Fanaroff and Martin's Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine*. 11th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2020:chap 18.

Elsayed NA, Aleppo G, Aroda VR, et al. 15. Management of diabetes in pregnancy: standards of care in diabetes-2023. *Diabetes Care*. 2023;46(Suppl 1):S254-S266. PMID: 36507645 pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36507645/ [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36507645/].

Landon MB, Catalano PM, Gabbe SG. Diabetes mellitus complicating pregnancy. In: Landon MB, Galan HL, Jauniaux ERM, et al, eds. *Gabbe's Obstetrics: Normal and Problem Pregnancies*. 8th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2021:chap 45.

Review Date 4/1/2023

Updated by: John D. Jacobson, MD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health