

GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that appears in pregnant women with no history of diabetes. "Gestational" is a medical term that refers to pregnancy. Approximately 135,000 women develop gestational diabetes each year. Gestational diabetes generally resolves itself after the baby is born. It is a form of type II diabetes. People with type II diabetes are able to produce insulin, but they cannot use it effectively in the body. Doctors believe that this form of diabetes occurs when the pregnant woman's pancreas cannot produce enough insulin to overcome the effect of the pregnancy hormones that her body produces. This hormone causes resistance to insulin, a condition that makes the insulin produced by the pancreas not be effective.

The risk factors for contracting gestational diabetes include:

- Being over 30 years old
- Being overweight by 20% over the ideal weight
- Having a relative (mother, father or sibling) with diabetes
- Having lost an advanced pregnancy
- Having had a baby with a birth weight of over 9 pounds

Most women have a test done to see if they have gestational diabetes between weeks 24 and 28 of pregnancy. That is when gestational diabetes tends to appear. (The test is generally not done on women under 25 years old with normal body weight with no family history of diabetes and who do not belong to ethnic groups that have high diabetes rates.)

The treatment of gestational diabetes includes following a special diet (to prevent gaining much weight) and preparing a nutrition plan for the rest of the pregnancy. These measures tend to be effective in controlling gestational diabetes. Some women with gestational diabetes need insulin treatment, which is suspended when the baby is born. Although this form of diabetes can generally be successfully controlled after childbirth, gestational diabetes makes you run the risk of having type II diabetes later in life. Your doctor will probably recommend frequent check-ups with blood glucose tests after the pregnancy.