

Dietary advice for women with a history of Gestational Diabetes

Patient Name: _____

Date: _____

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What is Gestational Diabetes (GDM)?

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood. Glucose is another name for sugar. Gestational diabetes mellitus means your diabetes started in pregnancy and usually goes away after you have your baby.

I had GDM in a previous pregnancy: do I need to follow the diet again this time?

If you had GDM in a previous pregnancy, you have a high risk of developing GDM again in this pregnancy. A healthy, balanced diet can reduce excessive weight gain and risk of complications in your pregnancy. You can ask your midwife or obstetrician to refer you to the dietitian.

How does this diet help my blood sugar levels?

Managing your lifestyle (diet and physical activity) is the **main treatment** for gestational diabetes. If you had it in a previous pregnancy we recommend following a diet low in added sugars. Carbohydrate-based foods can increase your blood sugar levels so changing the type, amount and timing of these foods can improve your blood sugar control.

What foods contain carbohydrates?

There are three different types of carbohydrates: 1. Starchy carbohydrates, 2. Sugary carbohydrates and 3. Carbohydrates containing natural sugars. All of these carbohydrates increase your blood sugar levels as they break down into sugar (glucose) after you eat them.

1. Starchy carbohydrates

These foods are an important source of energy and you need them in your diet. You should aim to spread your carbohydrate intake out evenly across the day and it should make up approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate at main meals. Try to choose wholegrain and higher fibre carbohydrates for example wholegrain/whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta or couscous, brown basmati, brown rice, porridge (using jumbo oats), all bran or shredded wheat cereals. Limit white bread, white pasta, white rice and low fibre cereals such as rice crispies or corn flakes.

2. Sugary carbohydrates (added sugars)

These foods offer little nutritional value and are not needed in a healthy diet. Therefore, we advise you to avoid these foods. Examples of sugar-based carbohydrates are cakes, biscuits, chocolate (milk, white and dark), ice cream, sweets, fizzy drinks, juices, juice drinks, chocolate spread, hot chocolate, jams, syrups (including maple and agave) and honey. Added sugar is also found in cereal bars and cereals such as coco pops and other chocolate-based cereals, honey nut cornflakes and frosties - avoid these products and choose higher fibre options.

3. Carbohydrates containing natural sugars

These foods are important sources of many nutrients such as calcium and vitamin C. Examples of foods containing natural sugars are fruit, milk and yoghurt. Fruit is important source of many vitamins needed during pregnancy and you can have 3-4 portions a day. Where possible you should choose whole pieces of fruit and stick to one portion of fruit at a time. Fresh, frozen or tinned fruit are all ok to include, but be sure to choose tinned fruit in juice, not in syrup and drain off the juice. A portion of fruit is: 1 medium apple or orange, 2 smaller fruit such as 2 mandarins, kiwis or plums, or 1 handful of berries. Try to avoid/ limit fruit juices (fresh or concentrate), fruit drinks, smoothies and dried fruits e.g. raisins or dates. Dairy is an important source of calcium and you should aim for at least 3 servings a day of dairy products (milk, yoghurt and cheese) each day during pregnancy. If you do not consume dairy foods, be sure to buy unsweetened and fortified plant-based alternatives such as fortified soya milk or soya yoghurt with added calcium and vitamins.

What foods contain less carbohydrates?

While you are reducing your carbohydrate intake you may feel hungrier than normal. Use foods from the following food groups, which do not affect your blood glucose levels, to manage your appetite.

	Examples	How to Manage?
Protein	Lean red meat, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, cheese, tofu, Quorn, beans, lentils, tempeh, chickpeas, soy-based proteins, nuts, milk or fortified soya milk	Add these foods to meals and snacks to help you to feel full and to help your blood sugar levels. Some proteins also contain carbohydrate e.g. lentils &

		chickpeas - try to stick to no more than ½ cup (125g) with your meals
Fats	Butter, spreads, cream, mayonnaise Healthier fats: olive oil, rapeseed oil, avocado, oily fish, nuts	Fat should be eaten in small amounts. Try to choose healthy fats more often for example extra virgin olive oil instead of butter.
Vegetables	Spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, onions, tomatoes, sprouts, mushrooms, peppers, butternut squash, salad leaves, celery, olives, cabbage, courgette, aubergine, cucumber, asparagus, radish, sugar snap peas	These vegetables can be eaten freely. Apart from those which contain higher carbohydrate e.g. peas & sweetcorn - try to have no more than ½ cup (125g) with your meals.

Do I need to eat at specific times?

Regular meals spaced evenly throughout the day helps keep your blood sugar levels steady. Whilst you do not need to eat your meals at the exact same time every day, it is good to have a routine. Try to eat your main meals every 5 hours with snacks in between.

Can I have snacks?

Yes, you can have snacks between your meals and they can help keep your blood sugar levels steady. Adding a source of protein and/or fat to your carbohydrates is recommended. Suitable healthy snacks include:

- 1 piece of whole fruit with a handful of unsalted nuts or seeds
- 2 wholegrain crackers with cheese or avocado or chicken
- 1 slice of wholegrain toast with an egg/cheese/avocado/peanut butter/chicken
- 1 bowl of vegetable or chicken soup
- 1 small pot of natural, Greek or high protein yogurt with berries, chopped nuts or milled seeds
- A 200-300ml glass of milk (or fortified Soya milk) with a slice of wholewheat toast with nut butter (no added salt or sugar) or cheese
- A high protein bar (opt for minimum 20g protein and low sugar) and a piece of fruit

“I’m not usually hungry in the morning; do I need to eat breakfast?”

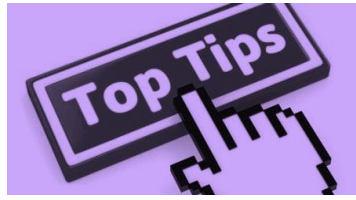
Yes, to improve your blood sugar control its important to not skip breakfast and to aim to eat within 1 hour of waking every morning. A protein food with a small amount of high fibre starchy carbohydrate is recommended. Examples include 1-2 scrambled or boiled eggs with 1-2 slices of wholegrain toast or a small bowl of porridge with milk and chopped nuts or seeds. Try to keep fruit for later in the day.

Should I avoid all carbohydrates?

No, you do not need to avoid all carbohydrates! As well as providing us with energy, carbohydrate foods contain many important vitamins, minerals and fibre that are difficult to get from other foods. Choosing higher fibre carbohydrates as often as possible and spreading your intake over the day will help with blood sugar control.

Sample Meal Plan

<u>Time</u>	<u>Meal</u>	<u>Suggestion</u>
8am	Breakfast:	1-2 slices of wholegrain bread with 2 scrambled eggs
10:30am	Snack:	2 brown crackers with hummus
1pm	Lunch:	Chicken breast with salad, 2 slices of brown bread & a pear
3:30pm	Snack:	1 apple with a handful of almonds or a spoon of peanut butter
6pm	Evening Meal:	Salmon fillet with vegetables, 4-6 baby potatoes & a small pot of plain yogurt
9pm	Snack:	1 slice of wholegrain/wholemeal toast with melted cheese & baby tomatoes



Summary and Key 'Take-Home' Messages

- ✓ Have 3 regular meals every day and 2-3 healthy snacks as needed
- ✓ Include carbohydrate at all of your main meals
- ✓ Choose higher fibre and wholegrain/whole-wheat carbohydrates regularly
- ✓ Try to have some protein and/or a source of healthy fat with every meal and snack - this will improve your satiety (fullness) and help your blood sugar control
- ✓ Limit/avoid all sugary carbohydrates e.g. biscuits, chocolate bars, sweets & fizzy drinks
- ✓ Drink plenty of water and other fluids daily - aim to drink at least 2 litres (7- 8 cups) each day.