

What is gestational diabetes



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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You have been given this leaflet because you have been found to have gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM). We hope that this leaflet will help you to understand the information the doctor or specialist nurse has told you. Please ask if there is anything you do not understand about the condition or its treatment.

What is gestational diabetes?

GDM is a type of diabetes that arises during pregnancy. It usually develops between 24 and 36 weeks because the body cannot produce enough insulin to meet the extra needs of pregnancy. Occasionally GDM is found earlier in pregnancy – if it is, it is possible that diabetes was present before you became pregnant.

Why is it important?

The main reason to recognise and treat GDM is to try to reduce the chance of having a larger than normal baby, which can cause problems at the time of delivery.

How is it treated?

Often, blood glucose levels can be controlled by diet alone. 10 to 30% of women with GDM require insulin or tablets for control. More information about the treatment will be given to you.

Will it go away after delivery?

Usually it does. To make sure your blood glucose levels have returned to normal, we will arrange a fasting sugar test six weeks after your baby is born. If you took insulin injections during your pregnancy, you may be able to stop them after your baby is born.

- Women with GDM are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than the general population (a 30-50% risk if you have had GDM compared to a 10% risk in the general population).
- Women from ethnic groups that have a high rate of Type 2 diabetes (African, African-Caribbean and Asian) are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes if they have had GDM.

Will I get GDM again?

Possibly. You are more likely to have GDM again if you've had it in previous pregnancies; but, if you are overweight and then lose weight, you may cut your risk of having GDM again. We would suggest having a test for diabetes if you are planning a pregnancy in the future.

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