

Eating with gestational diabetes

Introduction

In this leaflet you will find information and advice about eating with gestational diabetes. This advice remains applicable for the entire duration of the pregnancy. Even when your blood glucose curves are considered good during a check-up, keep following these rules in order to maintain the good blood glucose curves.

What is gestational diabetes?

Diabetes gravidarum, better known as gestational diabetes, is a form of diabetes mellitus. It causes the body to be unable to balance blood glucose levels (=sugar levels in the blood) properly.

Glucose (sugar) is the fuel for the body and is extracted from various types of carbohydrates. These carbohydrates are in all types of foodstuffs. In the intestines, the food is digested and the carbohydrates are broken down into glucose. After this, the glucose is absorbed into the intestines and transported into the blood. From the blood, glucose is taken into the cells of the body with the help of insulin.

Gestational diabetes can arise from the 4th month of pregnancy. From that moment, the placenta produces more pregnancy hormones which work against the insulin, which makes the body temporarily less sensitive to insulin. As a reaction to this, the pancreas would normally begin making more insulin, but in someone with gestational diabetes, this is not the case. The consequence is that too much glucose remains in the blood and blood glucose increases.

Poorly-regulated gestational diabetes can cause the unborn child to become too large. This can lead to complications during the pregnancy and birth.

Gestational diabetes and eating

To prevent high blood glucose levels, it is necessary to pay attention to your diet. Eating large quantities of carbohydrates can lead to blood glucose levels that are too high.

What products contain carbohydrates?

There are various types of carbohydrates:

1. Sugar (sucrose): in 'regular' sugar from the sugar jar, honey, sweets, baked goods, cake, ice cream, pudding, soda.
2. Fruit sugar (fructose): in fruits and fruit juices.
3. Milk sugar (lactose): in dairy products, like milk, yoghurt, pudding, etc.
4. Starch: in grains (wheat, maize, rice), grain products (flour, bread, pasta, wraps, matzos, couscous, bulgur, risotto, puff pastry, chapatti), legumes (beans, peas, lentils, sprouts, chickpeas), root vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, chips).

How much do you need a day during your pregnancy?

Bread	6 slices
Potatoes, rice, pasta, risotto, chapatti, etc.	4 pieces or 200 grams
Vegetables	4 servings spoons or 200 grams
Fruit	2 pieces
Milk(products)	2-3 glasses or 450 ml
Cheese	1,5 slices
Meat products	1,5 slices
Meat	100 grams (raw weight)
Margarine	5 grams per slice of bread
Fat for preparing food	1 tablespoon
Fluids	1,5 - 2 litres

Advice

Plan six to seven meals per day

A regular offering of carbohydrates can prevent too much glucose from entering the blood simultaneously. The blood glucose can increase too much this way. That is why it is recommended to spread six to seven meals throughout the day. These consist of three main meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and three to four snacks of roughly 15 grams of carbohydrates.

Avoid products with added sugars

Products with added sugars, such as cake, sweets and fruit juice, come with extra carbohydrates. This leaves less room for foods with natural sugars.

Products with a lot of added sugars contain few nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals.

Eating for two is not necessary

It is not necessary to eat for two people during pregnancy. During the entire pregnancy, only 250 extra calories per day are necessary. This adds up to just two slices of brown bread with margarine and cheese, meat products or diabetic jam. Pay attention to the number of carbohydrates.

Be cautious of 'light' products

The term 'light', for products, may be used when these contain less than 33% of carbohydrates, calories, fat or salt than the original product. So this means that a product contains less fat, but for the sake of flavour compensates with more carbohydrates, such as the 'light' version of chips.

There are also 'light' products in which all the sugar is replaced by artificial sweetener, like 'light/zero' soda. This soda can be safely consumed at a maximum of 2-3 glasses per day. The advantage of these 'light' sodas is that the blood glucose level is not increased. With 'light' fruit juice, no sugar is added, but the fruit sugars that naturally occur in it cannot be removed. This fruit juice does contain fewer carbohydrates than the original product. However, it still contains a portion of the natural sugars and therefore, it can increase your blood glucose value.

After the pregnancy

Gestational diabetes usually disappears right after giving birth, as the pregnancy hormones are no longer present. In 5% of women, the diabetes persists.

After pregnancy, you must be regularly examined. The chance of developing diabetes later is now significantly larger. You can reduce this chance by maintaining a healthy diet, sufficient exercise and a normal weight.

Telephone surgery

Telephone surgery is from Monday through Friday from 09:00 – 10:00h. Outside of these times, you can leave a voicemail message.