

DIABETES AND PREGNANCY

Diabetes is a condition that causes high levels of glucose in the blood. Glucose is a sugar that is the body's main source of energy. Health problems can arise when the glucose levels are too high. Diabetes is of special concern during pregnancy. Diabetes can occur in women who are not pregnant, or it can start during pregnancy. When it first occurs during pregnancy it is called gestational diabetes. Either type of diabetes requires special care. This pamphlet will explain:

- How diabetes can affect your pregnancy
- What you can do to control it
- What care you will need before, during, and after pregnancy

Causes

Diabetes occurs when there is a problem with the way the body makes or uses insulin. Insulin is a hormone that converts glucose in food into energy. When the body does not make enough insulin, or when the body is not using insulin properly, the level of glucose in the blood becomes too high. This is called hyperglycemia (high sugar levels in the blood).

During pregnancy, the hormones produced by the placenta can limit the actions of insulin. As a result, gestational diabetes may occur.

Gestational diabetes can occur even when no risk factors or symptoms are present. For this reason, pregnant women often are tested for diabetes. Gestational diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born. However, women who have had gestational diabetes are at a greater risk of developing diabetes many years later. You should tell your doctor if you have had gestational diabetes.

Testing for Diabetes

Women with high risk factors should have blood glucose screening at their first prenatal visit. Others may be tested between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy.

The test for diabetes is safe and simple. Samples of your blood are taken after you drink a sugar solution. The glucose level then is measured. A high level suggests that there may be a problem with glucose control. If you have a high level of glucose on the screening test result, further testing will be done to find out if you have diabetes.

Prenatal Care

You play a key role in controlling your diabetes. Prenatal care helps monitor your condition as well as that of the baby. You may need to see your doctor often for regular checkups and tests.

A woman with diabetes often needs to be monitored closely during pregnancy. She may need to have certain tests done more often. These tests can help the doctor be aware of any problems and take steps to correct them. Your doctor can answer questions and tell you more about these tests.

Delivery

In most cases, women with diabetes go into labor normally when the time comes and have a normal vaginal delivery. They may require special monitoring of their glucose levels and the baby during labor. If there are problems during pregnancy, labor may need to be induced (brought on) early.

* Please see brochure in link