

Dietary advice for gestational diabetes



Information for patients

Diabetes Service



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Introduction

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that may occur when you are pregnant. During pregnancy, the hormones that your body produces may affect the way that your insulin works. As a result this can lead to higher blood glucose levels. This is called 'insulin resistance'.

When you eat foods or drinks that contain carbohydrate they are broken down to produce glucose. Insulin allows glucose to move from your blood stream into all of your cells to be used for energy. In gestational diabetes the insulin resistance causes your blood glucose levels to rise to higher levels than normal. This could cause complications for you and your baby.

Monitoring blood glucose levels

You will be taught how to do this by the midwives at the diabetes workshop.

Your targets for blood glucose levels during your pregnancy are:

Before meals: **less than 5.3 mmol/l**

After meals (1 hour after finishing a meal): **less than 7.8 mmol/l**

Your diet during pregnancy

It is important to continue to eat a healthy balanced diet for you and your baby. Now you need to think about carbohydrate foods (carbs) as well. This will help you manage your blood glucose during your pregnancy.

Know your Carbohydrates

Starchy carbohydrates

- Bread, crackers, pitta bread, thick sauces and soups, breadcrumbs, pastry and Yorkshire pudding
- Potatoes, rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, bulgur wheat
- Breakfast cereals including oats
- Starchy vegetables such as plantains, yams and sweet potato
- Baked beans and other pulses such as chickpeas

Naturally sweet carbohydrates

- Fruit - fresh, tinned and dried
- Fruit juice
- Milk
- Yoghurt

Sugary carbohydrates

- Cakes and biscuits
- Ice cream, desserts and puddings
- Sugar and honey
- Sugary drinks
- Jams and marmalade
- Sweets and chocolates

Foods containing very little or no carbohydrate

- Protein foods such as meat, poultry, fish, cheese, eggs and nuts, QuornTM, soya products such as tofu and soya mince
- Fatty foods such as butter, margarine and other fat spreads, oils, mayonnaise, oily salad dressings and cream
- Most vegetables and salads
- Flavourings such as salt, pepper, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, herbs and spices
- Sugar free drinks - tea, coffee, sugar free fizzy drinks, sugar free cordials, sugar free flavoured water
- Artificial sweeteners such as Saccharin and aspartame etc

How to be more Carb Smart

1. **Type** of carbohydrate - choose types of carbohydrate that are digested more slowly
2. **Amount** - keep to small portions of carbohydrate
3. **Timing** - have carbohydrate at your three main meals and try to limit snacking on carbs between meals
4. **Active** after meals - move around after eating

Step 1: Type of carbohydrate

All types of carbohydrate are broken down to produce glucose but at different speeds. This is known as the glycaemic index (GI). Foods with a high GI cause a rapid rise in blood glucose whereas lower GI foods break down more slowly giving a more gradual rise in blood glucose. Lower GI carbs are a better choice for you. Making other changes to your meals can also slow down further the rise in glucose after a meal.

Tips on lowering the glycaemic index (GI) of meals

- Swap your usual carbs for lower GI types (see page 6 for smart swaps)
- Avoid meals and snacks that only contain carbs such as toast with jam, and pasta with tomato sauce, as these will have a higher GI. Add in protein such as meat or yoghurt, or healthy fats including avocado and nuts. For example, add chicken to the pasta in tomato sauce; add eggs, cheese or peanut butter with the toast instead of jam
- Try eating the protein and vegetable part of your meal first before the carbs
- Add beans and pulses to salads, stews and curries
- Reheating chilled or frozen carbs such as bread or a left over pasta meal turns the starch into resistant starch which means it may be digested more slowly than freshly cooked types

Smart Swaps

High GI carbs - choose less often	swap for	Low GI carbs - choose more often
Bread: White bread Wholemeal bread Brown bread		Multigrain, granary, seeded bread Wholemeal pitta bread Crispbread with seeds Rye or pumpernickel bread
Rice and Grains: Instant rice Long grain rice Jasmine rice Sticky rice		Basmati rice Brown rice Pearl barley Buckwheat Quinoa Bulgur wheat
Cereals: Cornflakes Rice crispies Quick cook porridge Sugar and /or honey covered cereals		Jumbo oats Nutty muesli
Potatoes: Baked, mashed, boiled potatoes without skins		New potatoes with skins Sweet potato

<p>Fruit: All fruit can be included but tropical fruit and dried fruit can cause a quick rise in blood glucose</p>		<p>Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and other berries Grapefruit All other fruit (tennis ball size portion)</p>
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Reducing sugar in your diet

Avoid these high sugar foods	Use these lower sugar or sugar free alternatives
Sugar, honey, jam, syrup	Sweeteners like CandereI™, Sweetex™ or a supermarket brand
Sugary drinks like fizzy drinks, energy drinks, Lucozade, full sugar squash, fruit juices, smoothies	Diet fizzy drinks, no added sugar squash, water (including flavoured water if no added sugar)
Sweets, chocolates, sweet puddings, cakes, sweet biscuits, jelly	Plain biscuits such as a ginger biscuit, no added sugar jelly and desserts, tinned fruit drained of juice, or natural yogurt or diet yoghurts

Step 2: Amount of carbohydrate

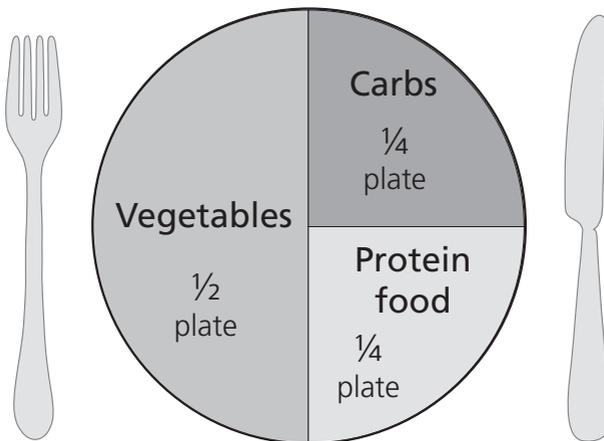
Have one portion of carbohydrate at each meal. There are two simple ways to check your meal time portion of rice, pasta, potato etc:

- Keep the portion to no more than the size of your fist or a teacup
- Your portion should cover no more than a quarter of your plate (10 inch/25 cm diameter)

For the rest of your plate:

- around half should be vegetables or salad
- the rest should contain a good quality protein food such as lean red meat, poultry, fish, cheese, eggs, pulses, nuts and seeds or vegetarian alternatives such as QuornTM

Healthy balanced plate



Carb portion size guide - Choose only one per meal

	Food	
Bread	1 medium pitta bread 2 slices medium bread 1½ slices thick bread 4 crispbread 1 medium chapatti	
Cooked Pasta, Rice and Grains	Up to a fist-sized portion or 4 tablespoons/tea cup size	
Cereals	30g uncooked oats 30g muesli	
Potatoes	4 new potatoes (egg size) A small sweet potato (fist size)	
Plantain Yam	½ fist sized portion 2 slices, boiled	

Step 3: Timing

- Spread your carbohydrate over the day
- Avoid having large portions of carbohydrate at meal times

You may find that you are eating less carbohydrate than you would normally.

Try to limit snacking between meals, but if you are hungry, choose one of the following snacks.

What snacks are suitable to have between meals?

Carbohydrate snacks	Non carbohydrate snacks
Small fruit - apple, plum, kiwi, etc	Ham
Small banana (fun size)	Chicken
Small handful of berries such as raspberries, strawberries, blackberries	Hard boiled egg
Small glass of milk	Cheese including cottage cheese, a cheese triangle or Babybel™
Thin small slice of bread with topping such as ham, chicken, salad, etc	Tinned fish
2 wholegrain crackers, crispbreads or rice cakes with a topping such as cottage cheese, peanut butter, avocado, lean ham etc	Hummus, salsa, peanut butter
Small bag of plain popcorn (15g)	Raw vegetables - carrots peppers, celery, tomato, cucumber, lettuce
Diet yogurt	Olives
	Nuts and seeds - small handful
	Sugar free jelly

Step 4: Keep active

- Keep active after you have finished your meal. Aim for a 10 to 15 minute walk or tidy up. This may help to keep your blood glucose in target after meals
- Try to avoid sitting around for long periods. Get up at least every 30 minutes for up to 5 minutes
- Aim to walk for at least 30 minutes each day if you can, this can be broken down into small chunks

Meal Ideas

Breakfast

- 1 to 2 eggs on up to 2 slices of seeded bread with mushrooms and tomatoes
- Avocado or peanut butter on up to 2 slices of toast
- Jumbo oats with milk and seeds
- Greek yogurt with nuts, seeds or berries

Light meals

- A wholemeal pitta bread with cheese, avocado, salad and dressing
- Vegetable sticks with hummus or cream cheese with up to 4 oatcakes
- Mixed salad with butter beans, nuts, olives, and vinaigrette dressing with 2 crispbread
- Tinned fish with salad and 4 new potatoes with skins
- Lentil and vegetable soup followed by a piece of fruit

Hot meals

- Stir-fried vegetables with shredded cooked meat or Quorn™, and up to 4 tablespoons of cooked basmati or brown rice (add flavour with soy sauce for example)
- Mixed salad with grilled meat and a small baked sweet potato with skin on
- Steamed vegetables served with pasta and baked fish fillet (add extra flavour with garlic, lemon juice, herbs etc)
- Omelette with sliced potatoes, vegetables and bacon
- Mixed bean and vegetable curry with cauliflower rice
- Chickpeas and roast aubergine, courgette, peppers and onions with bulgur wheat

Contact details

Specialist Midwifery Diabetes Antenatal Team - **0114 226 8236** (it is not possible to record messages on this line).

Diabetes Specialist Team - **0114 271 4445**

Further information

Diabetes UK - www.diabetes.org.uk

NHS Healthy Lifestyle advice - www.nhs.uk/livewell

Gestational Diabetes: Carbs and Cals - available as a book
ISBN-10:1908261226



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