



The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Dietary advice for gestational diabetes

Produced by the Dietitians at Newcastle Nutrition, The
Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

October 2018
Review date: October 2020

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Useful websites

For information on foods to avoid, food safety and food labels please visit.

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/foods-to-avoid-pregnant.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/goodfood/pages/food-labelling.aspx>

For more information on gestational diabetes please visit

<http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/What-is-diabetes/Other-types-of-diabetes/Gestational-diabetes/>

Further information

Please contact your diabetes team if you have any concerns

Dietitian:

Contact Telephone Number: (0191) 282 4812

Diabetes Specialist Midwife:

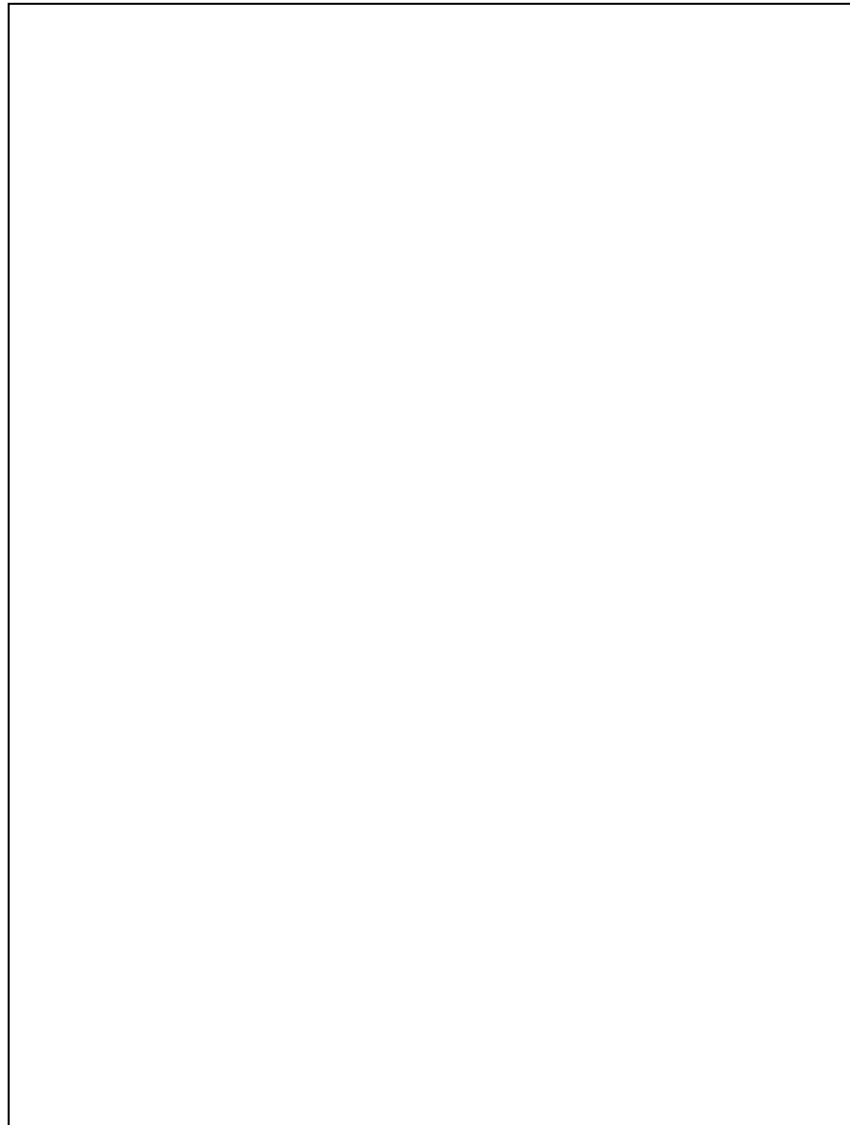
Contact Telephone Number:

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone 0800 0320202 (Monday to Friday 9am -5pm),
northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

My action plan



Introduction

What is gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that is first diagnosed in pregnancy usually during the second or third trimester.

Why does gestational diabetes occur?

The body's need for insulin increases during pregnancy. Insulin is a hormone that controls the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood stream. When there is not enough insulin or the insulin does not work properly your blood glucose levels rise. A small number of pregnant women cannot meet this extra demand for insulin and so gestational diabetes develops.

You can also be at increased risk if:-

- You are very overweight
- You have a family history of type 2 diabetes (parent, brother or sister)
- You have previously had a baby that weighed more than 4.5kg.
- You have had gestational diabetes before
- Your family origin is South Asian, Black Caribbean or Middle Eastern

What does having gestational diabetes mean?

Your blood glucose levels will be monitored closely throughout your pregnancy to reduce the risk of complications such as a large baby leading to a difficult delivery

How can I control my blood glucose levels?

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle will often be the only treatment required. You will be asked to check your blood glucose levels which should be:

- Less than 5.3mmol/l before breakfast and
- Less than 7.8mmol/l one hour after your largest meal

Blood glucose levels may rise as your pregnancy progresses therefore metformin tablets or insulin injections may be needed to control them.

Always contact your diabetes team if you have any concerns.

How can I manage my gestational diabetes?

The lifestyle choices recommended for women with gestational diabetes are similar to those for all pregnant women.

- Spread your food out through the day by having three small meals – avoid having one large meal.
- Balance your meals as shown on the plate model opposite.
- Eat less fatty and sugary foods.
- Use less fats and oil in cooking and spreading.
- Have water or sugar free drinks.
- Reduce then stop adding sugar to drinks and on cereal.
- Include low fat milk, cheese and yoghurt every day.
- **Remember to follow all food safety and hygiene practices for pregnancy, see page 13 for details.**
- Avoid alcohol completely.
- Be more active and reduce time spent being inactive

Frequently asked questions

1. **I have seen sugar free sweets, can I eat them?**

Yes, but be aware they can have a laxative effect if you eat too many.

2. **Are sweeteners safe to have?**

Current evidence shows that it would be difficult for an adult to go over the safe limits.

3. **I feel hungry because I am eating less bread and potatoes what can I do?**

You can increase your portion of vegetables and salad. Make sure you are drinking enough water.

4. **Can I eat takeaways?**

They can be enjoyed but they are higher in fat and sugar than homemade. Extra care needs to be taken with food choices and portion sizes. Follow the plate guide on page 3 which will limit the amount of rice, noodles and chips. Food poisoning is the greatest risk from takeaway food.

5. **What about cutting out bread and potatoes?**

These foods are the most readily available source of energy for your body and important sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Do not cut these out; follow the serving guide on page 4

6. **Will this go away after my baby is born?**

Usually it does however many women go on to develop type 2 diabetes within a few years. Your GP should check your blood glucose levels after six weeks and then every year. To reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes continue to follow the advice in this booklet and aim to be a healthy weight.

Why the emphasis on physical activity?

- It will improve your blood glucose control and manage weight.
- You will sleep better, feel less tired, have good circulation and reduce swelling of hands and feet.

What physical activity can I do?

If you are new to exercise, check with your midwife or GP before starting a programme.

- Walking with good posture is safe and accessible.
- If swimming avoid butterfly after 1st trimester and breast stroke if you suffer pain in the front of the pelvis.
- Ask instructors if their exercise class is suitable. Avoid routines with sudden twists, turns
- Pilates will help posture, balance, core stability and risk of back pain
- Look for specific ante natal exercise classes

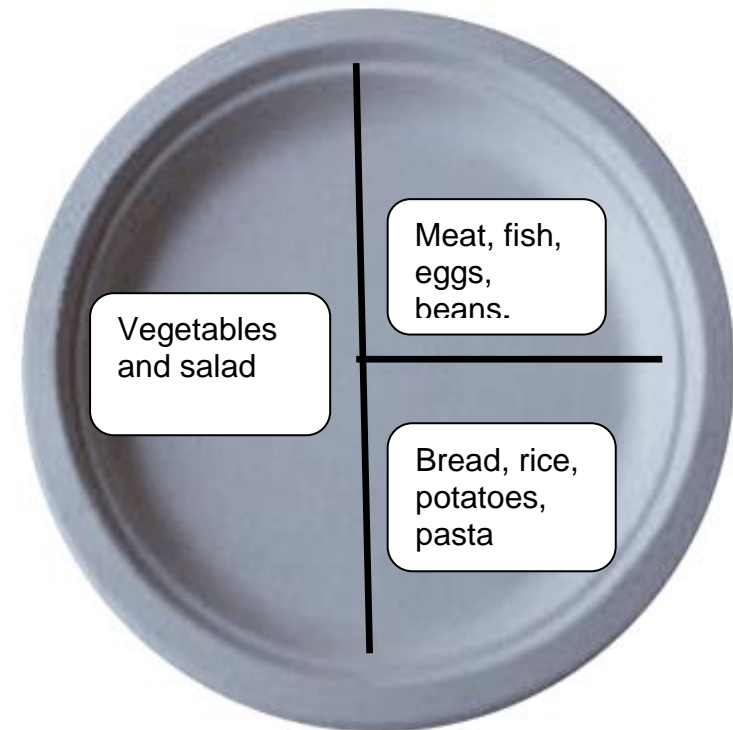
What else should I do?

Always warm up and cool down gradually. During your main exercise you should feel your heart rate and temperature rise and your breathing increase but not to a level that you are unable to hold a conversation.

What should I not do?

- Contact sports and those which carry a risk of falls such as skiing, horse riding and ice skating.
- After week 16, during any exercise that involves lying on your back change position every three minutes.

Balance your plate to help reduce your blood glucose and manage your weight.



Make your mid-day and evening meal look like the plate above. You can add in one of your fruit portions

Food choices

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, noodles

These foods release glucose gradually when they are broken down by the body. They provide slow release energy.

Wholegrain varieties release glucose even more slowly and are more filling, so choose seeded granary breads, oat breakfast cereals, pasta and brown rice.

Small servings of these foods are beneficial, but large ones will cause blood glucose levels to rise too high and increase weight.

These foods should be included at three meals each day. If your meal contains two starchy foods eg curry with rice and a chapatti, or a roast dinner with potatoes and Yorkshire puddings have a half serving of each one (¼ plate in total).

Serving sizes for a meal:

- 1 medium pitta bread or chapatti or tortilla wrap
- 1 medium bread roll or ciabatta roll
- 2 slices medium bread or 2 crumpets
- ½ large bagel or 1 English muffin
- 4 tablespoons of uncooked oats
- 6 tablespoons of breakfast cereal
- 2 cereal biscuits e.g. weetabix or shredded wheat
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened muesli
- 6 tablespoons of cooked rice, couscous or noodles (50g dried weight)
- 6 tablespoons of cooked pasta (about 50g dried weight)
- 4 crackers, crispbreads or oatcakes
- 4 egg sized potatoes or 1 medium jacket potato

Salt

A high salt intake is linked to high blood pressure. There is enough salt in foods without adding more. If needed, add a small amount during cooking or at the table, not both.

- Most of our salt comes from packaged foods so choose these less often.
- Flavour meals with pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice, vinaigrette, mustard.

Fluids

- Fluids help our body to work efficiently.
- Drink around 2 litres (10 mugs) of fluid each day. Water is the best choice.
- Remember that tea, coffee and cola drinks are limited in pregnancy due to the caffeine content. See website details on page 13
- Limit fruit juice due to the fruit sugar content.
- More water is required during exercise and in hot environments.

Nutrition information

- By looking at the colour codes you can keep track of how much fat, sugar and salt you eat. Choose mainly 'green'.
- You can compare similar foods to help choose the best option.
- This allows you to keep an eye on portion size and how the food fits into a balanced diet.
- The ingredients list can help if you need to look for or avoid a certain ingredient.

Cutting down on these foods will help to reduce blood glucose and excess weight.

Instead of	Choose
Sugar in drinks, on cereal	Use less then stop
Sugary drinks	Water, low calorie drinks or soup
Cakes, biscuits, sweets	A fruit portion or diet yoghurt
Chocolate	Low calorie hot chocolate
Honey, sugar or frosted cereal	Porridge, cornflakes, wheat cereal
Fried foods	Grill, bake, roast
Pies, pasties	Sandwich or jacket potato
Crisps	Plain popcorn, vegetable sticks, 25g nuts
Cream, cheese sauce	Tomato or vegetable based sauce

How much can I have?

These foods can only be included as occasional treats rather than everyday foods. Biscuits and other snacks are not required between meals. Three regular meals should fill you up however if you do feel hungry have your fruit allowance between meals rather than with a meal.

Fruit

Fruit contains natural sugars which cause blood glucose to rise. As fruit also contains fibre and vitamins, it should be eaten daily. Have up to three portions per day, spread over the day. Avoid having more than one portion at once.

As fruit juice and smoothies cause a large, fast rise in blood glucose limit to one small glass (150ml) per day.

A portion is about 80g of fresh, frozen or canned fruit eg:

- 1 medium fruit eg apple, orange, pear, peach
- 1 small banana or ½ large banana
- 2 kiwi, satsumas, plums
- Small handful of grapes, cherries, berries
- 1 thick slice of pineapple or melon
- 3 tablespoons of canned fruit in juice or fruit salad (fresh or frozen)
- 1 tablespoonful (25g) dried fruit

Vegetables and salads

These do not cause blood glucose levels to rise and can be included in large amounts. Fill up on vegetables when you are cutting down on other foods, this helps to prevent hunger.

Use vegetables and salads to balance your meals:

- At mealtimes, fill half your plate with vegetables or salad
- Have vegetable soup or salad with your lunch
- Add extra vegetables, canned tomatoes and beans or lentils to soups, stews, casseroles and curries
- Remember, potatoes do not count as vegetables

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat

These foods do not usually cause blood glucose to rise.

Include two foods from this group every day.

A portion is:

- 3 tablespoons (120g) or ½ large can of butter beans, peas or lentils (50g dried weight)
- ½ large can of baked beans.
- 100g Quorn, 150g tofu
- 2 medium eggs
- Fish (white, smoked or oily) 100 -120g, 3 fish fingers
- Lean red meat or poultry the size of computer mouse (80 – 100g)

Hints and tips

- Beans, lentils and pulses are naturally low in fat, and provide fibre. Use these to bulk out the meal and replace some of the meat.
- Include two portions of fish a week, one of which is oily (no more than two oily fish per week).
- Oily fish are herring, kippers, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, trout, and tuna if fresh or frozen.
- Remove visible fat from meat and take the skin off chicken
- Use methods that allow the fat to drip away eg grill, roast on a trivet, dry fry then drain.
- Red meat should be limited to no more than 500g per week
- Limit processed meats to once a week eg sausages, pies and pasties.

Dairy and alternatives

Choose lower fat milk and cheeses, eg semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk.

Fruit or flavoured yoghurts can contain a lot of added sugar so choose one which has 40 – 60 kcals per 100g. For natural or Greek yoghurt choose low fat or fat free options.

Aim to have three portions per day; one can be a hard cheese.

A portion is:

- 200ml of semi-skimmed, 1% fat, or skimmed milk
- small pot (125g) of diet or lite yoghurt or fromage fraise
- a piece of cheese (30g / 2.5cm cube of cheese)
- 150g pot of reduced fat cottage cheese
- 1 small pot of low fat yogurt drink (60 – 100ml)

If you use a plant based alternative to milk, e.g. soya or oat, make sure you choose one which is unsweetened and fortified with calcium.

Food and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

This group **is not essential** for a healthy diet; they are usually very high in calories.

Limit all spreading fats and cooking oils

- Spread all fats thinly
- Measure cooking oil eg 1 teaspoon per person
- Aim to use no more than 100g fat or oil per week.
- Unsalted nuts can be included, up to 25g per day due to calorie content.