

Healthy Eating Guidelines

For Women with Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes (GDM) can happen during pregnancy as hormone levels in your body change. These changes affect how your body manages glucose (sugar). GDM makes it harder for your body to control your blood glucose and increases your risk for type 2 diabetes and other health conditions later in life.

Eating a healthy, well balanced diet, managing your weight gain and being physically active can help control your blood glucose and give you and your baby the nutrients you need for a healthy pregnancy.

Ask your health care provider to refer you to a diabetes clinic in your community. The dietitian and rest of the health care team will help you to plan a healthy diet that works for you and to have a healthy pregnancy. The information in this handout can help you to get started.



Steps you can take

Eat regular, balanced meals and snacks.

- | Enjoy three meals and three snacks spaced evenly throughout the day.
- | Include at least three food groups in a meal and two food groups for a snack.
- | Eat one of your snacks at bedtime.
- | See Additional Resources for a sample meal plan.

A balanced diet contains foods with carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats. Carbohydrates raise your blood glucose levels. Read on to learn which carbohydrates are the healthiest choices for you.

Carbohydrate is found in grain products, fruit and fruit juice, some vegetables, milk and alternatives, dried beans, peas and lentils, and foods such as cakes, cookies, squares, candy and sugary drinks.

- | Choose fibre-rich sources of carbohydrates like whole grain breads and cereals, and dried beans, peas and lentils. Fibre slows carbohydrate absorption into your blood.
- | Choose vegetables and fruit rather than juice.
- | Choose low glycemic index (GI) foods more often. Low GI foods raise blood glucose at a slower rate than high GI foods. See Additional Resources for more details on the GI.
- | See the table below for recommended carbohydrate foods.
 - | All types of carbohydrates except fibre raise your blood glucose.
 - | Glucose is used in your body to give you and your baby energy.

Add foods that contain protein and small amounts of healthy fats at each meal and snack. Protein and fats slow carbohydrate absorption into your blood.

- | Choose protein sources that are lower in fat. See the table below for recommended protein foods.
 - | Most protein foods do not raise your blood glucose because they have little or no carbohydrates.
- | Choose unsaturated fats instead of saturated or trans fats. See the table below for recommended fats and oils.
 - | Fat does not raise your blood glucose because it has no carbohydrates. Unsaturated fats are the healthiest type of fat.

Recommended sources of carbohydrates, protein and fat

Recommended Carbohydrate Foods	Recommended Protein Foods	Recommended Fats and Oils
whole grain breads, pastas and cereals brown or wild rice whole grains like quinoa, barley, bulgur yam, sweet potato milk yogurt fruit dried beans, peas and lentils (also a protein source)	lean cuts of chicken, beef, pork fish tofu eggs lower fat cheese (20% M.F. or less, cottage cheese) unsalted nuts and seeds, nut butters (also a healthy fat source)	vegetable oils (canola, olive, soybean) non-hydrogenated margarine avocado

Foods that will not affect your blood sugar include:

- | water;
- | most vegetables;
- | herbs and seasonings;
- | mustard; and
- | vinegar.

Limit foods that are high in sugar, fat, and/or salt.

- | These foods include cookies, cakes, donuts, chocolates, ice cream, chips, and deep-fried foods.
- | If you choose to eat these foods, have a small portion or have some only on special occasions.

Limit drinks like 100% fruit juice, pop and other sugary beverages (sweetened coffees and teas, cocktails, punches and drinks).

- | Drink water when you are thirsty.
- | Low fat (skim or 1%) milk is also a healthy choice.
- | Tea and coffee are safe during pregnancy.
 - | See Additional Resources for information about caffeine and herbal teas during pregnancy.

Continue to follow general healthy eating guidelines for pregnancy.

Other Considerations

If you eat or drink foods or beverages made with sugar substitutes, do so in moderation so that they do not replace more nutritious foods or drinks.

Take a daily multivitamin that has:

- | 0.4 mg (400 mcg) of folic acid (do not take more than 1 mg (1000 mcg) of folic acid per day);
- | 16 to 20 mg of iron;
- | Vitamin B12.

Daily physical activity such as brisk walking, especially after meals, helps to control blood glucose.

- | Check with your health care provider or diabetes educator before starting any new physical activity plan.



Additional Resources

For more information on food safety and healthy eating during pregnancy, visit our Healthy Eating web pages:

- | Food Safety During Pregnancy - www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/food-safety-pregnancy.html

- | Healthy Eating Guidelines for Pregnancy - www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/pregnancy.html

Canadian Diabetes Association

- | The Glycemic Index - www.diabetes.ca/documents/about-diabetes/111018_08-395_glycemic-index_0413_lc_final.pdf
- | Sugars and Sweeteners - www.diabetes.ca/documents/about-diabetes/121020-04-198-sugars-and-sweeteners_0413_AF_final2.pdf

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines -

www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_adults_en.pdf

Health Canada, Canada's Food Guide -

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

Sample Meal Plan for Women with Gestational Diabetes

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating or call 8-1-1 (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.