

# Gestational diabetes: Take charge to ensure healthy pregnancy

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Diabetes is considered a 'metabolic disorder', which disrupts the metabolic process of our body leading to a rise in blood sugar levels. People with diabetes are vulnerable to other co-morbidities and therefore require lifelong management. When diabetes occurs during pregnancy, it becomes even more critical as the risk involves two generations. In India, 5 million women suffer from gestational diabetes every year. Moreover, it is a lesser-known fact that children of mothers with GDM are 4 to 8 times more likely to develop diabetes as adults. Gestational diabetes also increases the risk of stillbirth, miscarriage and increased weight of the baby which can be dangerous for both mother and the baby.

The ADA and ACOG have recommended that during pregnancy, the fasting blood sugar value should be below 95 mg/dL and the post-meal blood sugar value should be below 140 mg/dL 1 hour after the meal, or 120 mg/dL 2 hours after the meal to reduce these risks.

Who is at risk of GDM?

- Women with borderline high sugar levels before pregnancy
- Over-weight women
- Consumption of a diet rich in saturated fat

Physically inactive before or during pregnancy

Family history of diabetes

During pregnancy nutrients that the baby needs to grow and develop, including sugar, are passed from the mother's blood to the baby through the placenta. For this to happen, the placenta releases some hormones which have an effect on the use of insulin in the mother's body and this can increase her blood sugar level.

While the body produces extra insulin in most women to manage this situation, in some cases, it does not. Hence, before planning a pregnancy, it is advisable that women ensure that their bodies are ready to support the metabolic changes.

It is possible to prevent gestational diabetes by maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and undertaking adequate physical activity before and during pregnancy, under advice and guidance from a gynaecologist.

If the risk of developing gestational diabetes is high, then the mother must regularly monitor blood sugar levels at home during pregnancy using a glucometer. This can help to diagnose gestational diabetes early and prevent its complications.