

## - Pregnancy

**Gestational diabetes: Navigating the menu, one bite at a time**

By adhering to a well-planned gestational diabetes diet, expecting mothers can prioritise their health and ensure a healthy start for their little ones, too

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When it comes to pregnancy, receiving advice on diet is common. However, it's essential to distinguish between helpful information and myths. One crucial aspect to monitor during pregnancy, especially for those with gestational diabetes, is food intake. A study published in the National Library of Medicine highlighted that in Southeast Asia, Malaysia had the highest prevalence of gestational diabetes at 18.3%, followed by India at 13.6%. Therefore, adhering to a gestational diabetes diet plan is crucial for a healthy pregnancy. Dr Anurag Aggarwal, a consultant in Internal Medicine at a hospital in Faridabad, provides insights.



**UNDERSTANDING GESTATIONAL DIABETES** Expectant mothers must be aware of gestational diabetes, a form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy, typically around the 24th to 28th week.

Dr Aggarwal explains that it is characterised by high blood sugar levels resulting from insulin resistance developed during pregnancy. Hormonal imbalances, genetic predisposition and excess weight can contribute to gestational diabetes. Women with this condition face a higher risk of complications such as caesarean delivery, low blood sugar levels in

**RECOMMENDED FOODS**

The good news is that gestational diabetes often resolves after childbirth. However, careful management is required to ensure the well-being of the mother and baby. To start with, here are some food options that women with gestational diabetes can safely include in their diet.

**High-fibre foods:** Whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables are excellent sources of fibre. These foods help regulate blood sugar levels, promote satiety and maintain stable energy throughout the day.

**Lean proteins:** Chicken, fish, tofu and legumes are examples of lean protein sources. They provide essential nutrients while minimising unhealthy fats. Proteins help stabilise blood sugar levels and play a crucial role in the baby's growth and development. **Healthy fats:** Avocados, nuts, seeds and olive oil are considered healthy fats. They support overall

health, help control blood sugar levels, promote a feeling of fullness, improve insulin sensitivity and reduce the risk of heart disease. Low-fat dairy products: Skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurt and cheese contain calcium, protein and vitamin D. These nutrients are essential for the mother's bone health and contribute to the baby's growth as well. Non-starchy vegetables: Broccoli, spinach, cauliflower and bell peppers are low in carbohydrates, rich in essential vitamins, minerals.

#### FOODS TO AVOID

If you have gestational diabetes, steer clear of certain foods to manage blood sugar levels effectively. These include sugary beverages, refined carbs, trans and saturated fats (aka deep-fried foods, fatty cuts of meat, high-fat dairy products) and excessive salt, as they can contribute to water retention and increase the risk of high blood pressure.

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