

## ***Your important health information (for Indian women)***

# **Healthy eating for gestational diabetes**

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### **What is gestational diabetes?**

Gestational diabetes occurs in pregnancy due to changes in your hormone levels. Diabetes is a condition where the level of glucose (a type of sugar) in the blood is too high. A higher than normal level of glucose in the blood while you are pregnant can cause problems for the baby, such as growing too large, early birth, distress during birth and/or low blood glucose after birth.

### **Why is your diet important in gestational diabetes?**

Following a healthy eating plan will help you to manage your blood glucose levels and weight gain during your pregnancy while providing adequate nutrition for you and your baby.



### **Nutrition in pregnancy**

It is important to eat a variety of healthy foods to meet you and your baby's nutritional needs. The recommendations for women with gestational diabetes are similar to those for all pregnant women, with some additional guidelines.

#### **Include the following foods in your diet each day**

- Fruit, vegetables, wholegrains (bread, rice, pasta), dairy (milk, yoghurt, paneer cheese, hard yellow cheese such as cheddar), cooked meat/chicken /fish /eggs (or alternatives e.g. legumes, nuts, seeds).

#### **Limit (eat in small amounts)**

- High mercury fish to one serve in two weeks (shark, flake, swordfish, marlin) with no other fish that fortnight. Limit moderate mercury fish to one serve per week (orange roughy, catfish) with no other fish that week. Any other fish or seafood can be eaten two to three times each week.
- Caffeine to 200mg/day (café coffee has 90 to 120mg/cup, tea has 10 to 50mg/cup). Coffee and tea should be avoided in the two hour period before testing blood glucose levels.

#### **Avoid (do not eat)**

- Alcohol and high risk listeria and salmonella (bacteria) foods such pre-prepared salads, cold/deli meats, raw eggs and soft white cheeses such as cold paneer, cottage and feta cheese.

## Managing your blood glucose levels

In food there are three major nutrients: They are fats, proteins and carbohydrates. Fats and proteins do not directly affect your blood glucose level. However, if eaten in large amounts they can cause extra weight gain which can make it harder to control your blood glucose levels.

There are two key factors to consider when managing your diabetes with diet:

1. Type of carbohydrate
2. Amount of carbohydrate

## What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are starches and sugars found in foods. They are broken down to glucose during digestion. Carbohydrates are found in many healthy foods and provide the body with fuel (energy). Foods that contain carbohydrates also provide fibre, vitamins and minerals. It is important to include these foods in your diet, especially when pregnant:

### High carbohydrate

1. Grains such as breads, flat bread, rice, pasta, noodles, breakfast cereals, semolina.
2. Fruit.
3. Dairy including milk and yoghurt (cheese is low in carbohydrate. Avoid soft cheeses such as cold paneer, brie, camembert, ricotta and feta unless they have been cooked until steaming hot. Hard cheeses are safe.
4. Vegetables
  - a. **Starchy vegetables:** potatoes, pumpkin, corn and legumes such as lentils, chickpeas, red beans/kidney beans, dahl.

### Low carbohydrate

- b. **Non-starchy vegetables:** All other cooked vegetables and salad vegetables such as eggplant, carrot, cauliflower, green beans, onions, zucchini, capsicum, tomato, okra.
5. Protein foods: Meat, chicken, fish, eggs, tofu, seeds and nuts such as pistachio, hazelnuts, almonds, cashews, peanuts, mixed nuts.

Herbs and spices such as garlic, cumin, paprika, coriander, cinnamon, chilli, mustard seeds, cloves, coriander, salt and pepper do not contain carbohydrate and can still be used to flavour food.

The high carbohydrate foods above will directly affect your blood glucose levels. The type and amount of these foods needs to be monitored.

The foods which are low in carbohydrate will not significantly affect your blood glucose levels.

## Sugar

Carbohydrate foods that contain little nutritional value include table sugar (white and raw), jaggery, soft drinks, honey, lollies, cakes, sweet biscuits, chocolate, deep fried foods (such as samosa, pakora, bonda, chips) and Indian sweets and desserts. It is best to limit these foods.

Small amounts of sugar, such as one teaspoon in a hot drink, should not affect blood glucose levels much.

## Artificial sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners contain either little or no carbohydrate. Sweeteners include Aspartame (Equal) (951), Sucralose (Splenda) (955) and Stevia (960). They can be used in small amounts instead of sugar and are safe to have during pregnancy. They are also found in artificially sweetened products such as diet soft drinks.

## What type of carbohydrate foods should I eat?

Different carbohydrate foods break down into glucose at different rates. Some break down quickly causing a large rise in blood glucose levels. These are referred to as higher Glycaemic Index (GI) foods. Others break down more slowly resulting in a smaller rise in blood glucose levels. These are referred to as lower Glycaemic Index (GI) foods.

Lower GI foods are the better choice for managing your blood glucose levels.

Carbohydrate food	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slowly digested foods that raise blood glucose least (lower GI)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quickly digested foods that raise blood glucose most (higher GI)
<b>Bread and flours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wholegrain bread slices, wraps and chapatti</li> <li>✓ Flatbread/naan/roti made with whole-wheat/grain flour and atta mix</li> <li>✓ Low GI white bread</li> <li>✓ Besan (Bengal gram) flour, bajra flour, kuttu flour, jau flour</li> <li>✓ Fruit and grain bread</li> <li>✓ Sourdough, sourdough rye</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X White/wholemeal bread slices, flatbread</li> <li>X White/wholemeal flatbreads/naan/roti</li> <li>X Fried bread (Dal Puri)</li> <li>X White Lebanese bread</li> <li>X Turkish bread</li> <li>X White flour</li> </ul>
<b>Cereals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Untoasted muesli</li> <li>✓ Rolled oats (porridge)</li> <li>✓ Weet-Bix blends</li> <li>✓ All- Bran, Guardian, Special K</li> <li>✓ Up &amp; Go</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Puffed rice, rice flakes and rice porridge</li> <li>X Instant oats (porridge)</li> <li>X Corn flakes</li> <li>X Puffed wheat</li> <li>X Coco Pops, Rice Bubbles</li> <li>X Froot Loops</li> </ul>
<b>Rice, pasta and grains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Long grain rice and Mahatma long grain rice</li> <li>✓ Basmati (brown and white)</li> <li>✓ Doongara clever rice, wild rice, red rice</li> <li>✓ Wheat pasta (white and wholemeal)</li> <li>✓ Bulgur or cracked wheat</li> <li>✓ Semolina, pearl couscous, barley</li> <li>✓ All noodles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Jasmine rice</li> <li>X White/brown short grain rice</li> <li>X Polenta</li> <li>X Cous cous</li> <li>X Millet</li> </ul>
<b>Starchy vegetables and legumes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Legumes such as lentils, red bean/kidney beans, chickpeas, mung beans, broad beans, dahl</li> <li>✓ Orange sweet potato, Nicola potato</li> <li>✓ Butternut pumpkin</li> <li>✓ Corn</li> <li>✓ Yam, cassava and taro</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X White potato</li> <li>X Purple sweet potato</li> <li>X Pumpkin (varieties other than butternut)</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Strawberries and other berries</li> <li>✓ Apples, pear, bananas</li> <li>✓ Orange, mandarin, kiwifruit, grapes</li> <li>✓ Nectarines, peaches, apricot, plums, mango</li> <li>✓ Passionfruit, guava, grapefruit</li> <li>✓ Dates</li> <li>✓ Tinned fruit in natural juice (not syrup)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Rockmelon, watermelon</li> <li>X Tinned fruit in syrup</li> </ul> <p>Note: Consume only small amounts of dried fruit, fruit juice and fruit puree bars. Fresh fruit is preferable.</p>
<b>Milk and yoghurt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Milk and yoghurt</li> <li>✓ Soy milk and yoghurt</li> <li>✓ Buttermilk</li> </ul> <p>Note: choose mostly low fat varieties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Sweetened condensed milk</li> <li>X Oat milk</li> <li>X Rice milk</li> </ul>

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<b>Biscuits, crackers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wholegrain crackers such as Vita-Weat, 9 Grain, Ryvita Multigrain</li> <li>✓ Arnott's Snack Right biscuits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Cakes</li> <li>X White savoury crackers such as Savoy</li> <li>X Rice crackers and rice cakes</li> <li>X Sweet biscuits such as Marie</li> <li>X Indian rusk biscuits</li> </ul>
<b>Extras</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Low fat ice cream and custard (limit)</li> <li>✓ Milo (made with low fat milk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Indian sweets and desserts, such as Gulab Jamun Jalebi, kheer (rice pudding)</li> <li>X Fried pastries such as samosa</li> </ul>

## What amount of carbohydrates should I eat?

You should eat three moderately sized meals and three small snacks each day.

The amount of carbohydrates recommended below is needed to meet your daily requirements in pregnancy. The amount of carbohydrate in food is counted in carbohydrate portions. Only high carbohydrate foods are counted in portions.

- **One carbohydrate portion is approximately 15g of carbohydrate.**
- **Aim to eat three portions of carbohydrate (45g) at each main meal and one to two portions of carbohydrate (15-30g) at each snack.**

Carbohydrate food	One portion (15g carbohydrate)	
<b>Breads and flours</b>	1 slice bread 1/3 large flatbread 1 small (30g or 15cm diameter) flatbread 1/3 cup uppuma 1/3 cup poha	1 small (30g or 15cm diameter) chapatti 2/3 (30g) naan bread 1 small (30g or 15cm diameter) plain dosa/idli 1 1/2 besan cheela (15cm diameter)
<b>Cereals</b>	2 tablespoons (1/4 cup) rolled oats and muesli 1/2 cup cooked porridge	1 1/2 Weet-Bix 1/2 cup breakfast cereal
<b>Rice, pasta and grains</b>	1/3 cup cooked rice 1/3 cup cooked bulgur/cracked wheat 1/2 cup cooked noodles	1/3 cup cooked white pasta 1/3 cooked semolina/cous cous
<b>Starchy vegetables and legumes</b>	1 small potato 3/4 cup canned/cooked lentils 1/2 cup canned/cooked legumes: (red beans/kidney beans, chickpeas) 1/2 cup cooked sweet potato/taro/yam	1/2 cup corn kernels 1 small corn cob 1 cup cooked pumpkin
<b>Fruit</b>	1 medium apple, orange, pear, peach 4 dates 1/2 large banana 1 small banana 1/2 cup grapes 1 1/2 cups melon, pineapple 1 cup berries, cherries 1/2 cup fruit juice 3 large apricots	1 whole grapefruit, pomegranate 25 small strawberries 8 extra-large strawberries 2 medium nectarines, plums 1/2 cup tinned fruit 1 tablespoon sultanas 6 dried apricots, prunes 2 small mandarins, kiwi 1/2 mango
<b>Milk and yoghurt</b>	100g fruit yoghurt 200g yoghurt, plain (always check yoghurt labels as the carbohydrate content may vary)	250ml milk (all types)

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<b>Other dairy</b>	2 small scoops low fat ice cream	1/3 cup low fat custard
<b>Biscuits, crackers and extras</b>	2 Ryvita 4 Vita-Weats 1 small muesli bar	2 Arnott's Snack Right biscuits 3 cups air popped popcorn 2 Indian rusk biscuits
<b>Flour</b>	2 tablespoons white/wholemeal flour 1/3 cup besan (Bengal gram) flour	1/3 cup atta flour

## Sample meal plan

### Breakfast (three portions carbohydrate)

- Two small chapatti or dosa (15cm diameter) – served with one small potato and spices or
- Two Weet-Bix with 250ml low fat milk and 1/2 small banana or
- Two slices multigrain toast with avocado or poly/monounsaturated margarine + 200g low fat natural yoghurt or
- 1/3 cup cooked kheer – made with long grain/basmati rice, 250ml low fat milk and one tablespoon of sultanas (no added sugar or condensed milk) **PLUS**
- one egg or
- 15g of nuts

### Morning snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- One serve of fruit + four Vita-Weat crackers with low fat cheese or
- 200g tub of fruit yoghurt

### Lunch (three portions carbohydrate) - choose one of the following three examples

- Two slices of multigrain bread or 2/3 cup long grain/basmati rice (cooked) or two small flatbread (15cm diameter) **PLUS**
- Plenty of salad or non-starchy vegetables (1/2 plate) **PLUS**
- One small potato **PLUS**
- Lean meat curry (mutton, lamb, chicken, fish)

### Afternoon snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- One serve of fruit with 200g natural low fat yoghurt or
- One slice multigrain bread with natural peanut butter or avocado

### Dinner (three portions carbohydrate)

- 2/3 cup long grain/basmati rice (cooked) or two small potatoes **PLUS**
- One small flatbread (15cm diameter)
- Plenty of salad or non-starchy vegetables (1/2 plate) **PLUS**
- Lean meat curry (mutton, lamb, chicken, fish)

### Evening snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- 250ml low fat milk + 30g unsalted nuts

Avoid eating in the two hour period between your meal and blood glucose test.

## Vegetarian sample meal plan

### Breakfast (three portions carbohydrate)

- Two small chapatti or dosa (15cm diameter) – served with one small potato and spices or
- Two Weet-Bix with 250ml low fat milk and ½ small banana or
- Two slices multigrain toast with avocado or poly/monounsaturated margarine + 200g low fat natural yoghurt or
- ⅓ cup cooked kheer – made with long grain/basmati rice, 250ml low fat milk and one tablespoon of sultanas (no added sugar or condensed milk)
- **PLUS** one egg or 15g of nuts

### Morning snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- One serve of fruit + 4 Vita-Weat crackers with low fat cheese or
- 200g tub of fruit yoghurt

### Lunch (three portions carbohydrate) - choose one of the following three examples

- Two slices of multigrain bread or ⅔ cup long grain/basmati rice (cooked) or two small flatbread (15cm diameter) **PLUS**
- Plenty of salad or non-starchy vegetables (½ plate) **PLUS**
- ¾ cup vegetarian curry (lentil, chickpea, bean with no added starchy vegetables)

### Afternoon snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- One serve of fruit with 200g natural low fat yoghurt or
- One slice multigrain bread with natural peanut butter, avocado or hommus

### Dinner (three portions carbohydrate)

- ⅔ cup long grain/basmati rice (cooked) or two small flatbread (15cm diameter) **PLUS**
- Plenty of salad or non-starchy vegetables (½ plate) **PLUS**
- Vegetarian paneer/tofu curry made with one small potatoes or one cup cooked pumpkin or ¾ cup vegetarian curry (lentil, chickpea, bean with no added starchy vegetables)

### Evening snack (one to two portions carbohydrate)

- 250ml low fat milk + 30g unsalted nuts

Avoid eating in the two hour period between your meal and blood glucose test.

### What can I drink?

- Drink mainly water, plain mineral water and soda water. Add fresh lemon or lime for flavour.
- Plain milk provides a good source of calcium and protein:
  - remember milk contains carbohydrate and needs to be included in your carbohydrate portions.
- Tea, coffee, diet soft drink and diet cordials can be consumed in moderation.

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## What if I still feel hungry?

If you still feel hungry add extra foods that are low in carbohydrate to your meals and snacks.

- Non starchy vegetables or salad (refer to page two)
- Meat, chicken, fish, tofu, eggs, plain nuts, seeds
- Cheese or hot paneer
- Avocado

## What if my blood sugars are still high?

In some instances, you may be eating correctly the right amount and type of carbohydrate but will still have high blood glucose levels. Some women need extra help to manage their blood glucose levels and may require insulin. If this occurs it is important not to avoid carbohydrates or further restrict your diet.

Please contact the Mercy diabetes educators if your blood glucose levels are high.

## After your pregnancy

### Am I at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes?

Your blood glucose levels will usually return to normal after the birth of your baby. Gestational diabetes is a risk factor for developing Type 2 diabetes later in life.

Eating healthy foods, controlling body weight, regular exercise and breastfeeding can reduce this risk



### Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Dietitian

#### **Mercy Hospital for Women**

Phone: 03 8458 4165

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Phone: 03 8754 3150

### Acknowledgements

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