

Information

Pregnancy and diabetes

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Before you become pregnant

If you have diabetes, and want to have a baby, there are several things you should do.

Before you become pregnant you must be sure your blood glucose levels are very well controlled. This means you should have levels of less than 5.6mmol/l before meals and no higher than 7.8mmol/l two hours after eating. It is hard to keep to these levels all the time, but you should aim for them.

It is important to speak to the doctor or nurse who looks after your diabetes, before you become pregnant. They can give you advice about your insulin and tablets, blood glucose level, the number of blood tests you should do, what food to eat and those to avoid and the folic acid tablet, which is advised. If you smoke, you should stop. Drinking a lot of alcohol and smoking when you are pregnant can harm your baby.

The doctor should arrange for you to have your eyes checked to be sure you have no eye problems (retinopathy) before you become pregnant. If you do have an eye problem, it must be treated before you become pregnant. Your eyes should continue to be checked during pregnancy.

The early days of pregnancy

Weeks 0 to 16 (Trimester one). At this time the larger inside parts of your baby will be growing such as heart, brain and the nerve supply. The eyes, ears and nose start to develop too.

You will be offered tests to check for the growth of your baby. This will be by an ultrasound scan. This is where gel is placed on your lower stomach (abdomen) and a special monitor is gently moved over the area. This also helps the doctor to know the date the baby might be born.

Blood tests will be done to check your kidneys, your eyes will be checked for any problems and your blood pressure measured.

You might feel very sick and must speak to the midwife (special nurse who cares for you when you are having a baby) about what to eat and drink and how much insulin you should have.

The middle weeks of pregnancy

Weeks 16 - 28 (Trimester two). Your baby's body will start to grow at the same rate as the head and you will feel it move around. Its heartbeat becomes more even. Its eyes are aware of light.

The charity for people with diabetes

Diabetes UK is the operating name of the **British Diabetic Association**
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Another ultrasound test may be done to check if there is anything wrong with the baby. You can decide if you want this test done. Speak to the doctor or midwife about this. The size of the baby's head and stomach can be measured on this scan. The baby's heart will be checked.

Blood tests will be done to check your health but one may be offered to check if the spine (back) of the baby has not developed properly. Your doctor or midwife will tell you about this. Other checks will be made such as your blood pressure, and looking for any sign of infection, which could affect the baby.

The amount of insulin you need will increase as the baby grows. You must keep testing your blood glucose level at least four times a day.

The last weeks of pregnancy

Weeks 28 - 40 (Trimester three). The baby grows very quickly at this stage. It needs a lot of food to grow and it gets it from you. The baby's head will move down in your stomach just before it is due to be born.

You will have another ultrasound, which will show the size of the baby and help the doctor to decide how and when the baby should be delivered. This will be discussed with you.

Blood tests to check your blood glucose levels, kidneys and iron level will be done. Also the baby's heart rate will be checked. Your blood pressure will also be checked to be sure it is not going too high.

Your insulin will need to be increased again during this time. You must continue to test your blood glucose level at least four times a day and if your level goes above 8mmol/l on more than one occasion, ask your doctor or midwife what you should do to balance your insulin and blood glucose level.

Delivery of your baby

Your doctor and midwife will discuss the best time and way of having your baby. It is important that your diabetes is carefully monitored during the labour and this can last several hours. The doctor may ask to put fluid put through a special tube in your arm (infusion) to help control your diabetes and insulin may also be added to this. You or the midwife will check your blood glucose level regularly. The midwife will make checks on you such as blood pressure and monitor how well the labour is progressing with a special monitor.

You must tell the doctor or midwife if you have pain, feel hungry, feel hypo or if anything does not seem quite right.

Controlling your diabetes after delivery

The amount of insulin you need will be less once you have had your baby. The nurse or doctor will tell you how much to take. Breastfeeding can make your blood glucose level go low so keep glucose tablets or a sugary drink by you when feeding the baby. You will need to drink extra if breastfeeding.

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