

Nicholas Austin – Family Medicine Clerkship – Period 1

Student Name:

Nicholas Austin

Plain Language Summary Title:

Weight gain between pregnancies increases the danger of developing gestational diabetes

Plain Language Summary:

Can the “baby weight” I gained from pregnancy be dangerous?

Being pregnant brings with it an expected gain of weight. This is healthy and normal. What isn't healthy is not losing weight or continuing to gain weight after pregnancy. This can put you at risk for a condition called gestational diabetes during a future pregnancy.

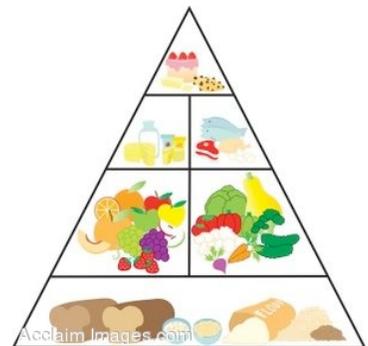


What is gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes is a state where the blood sugar, or glucose, gets too high in a woman during her pregnancy. A normal level of sugar is important for you and your baby. However, being overweight can make a substance called insulin not work right in your body. This can cause the sugar level to rise. The food you eat then cannot become the energy you need as effectively. This can affect the health of you and your baby. For instance, it may put your child at risk for obesity later in life. The same could be true for your risk of getting diabetes after pregnancy. Also, you may give birth earlier than what is ideal or need a C-section.

Is this something new?

The concept of diabetes during pregnant is not new, but a recent study has revealed something important. This is that weight gain between pregnancies increases the danger of getting diabetes.



The study examined more than 20,000 women over a ten year period. It then compared women who gained and did not gain weight. It also looked at those women who developed diabetes to those who did not. The results showed that gaining as little as six pounds can cause a problem. This can bring about a 70% increased risk of diabetes during a future pregnancy.

What can I do to keep this from happening?

There are a number of things that you can do to keep from getting diabetes while pregnant. One is to make sure to eat right. Eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and grains



decrease your risk. Your doctor may advise that you talk with a dietician as well. Also, developing an exercise regimen can be helpful. It should consist of exercise that you enjoy. This may be anything from walking with a friend, to swimming, or even dancing! Finally, going to regular checks to see your doctor is very important. Your doctor likely will give you a test in which you drink a sugary beverage to check for diabetes. It is also important that you take any prescribed medicines.

What are signs that I might be at risk for diabetes?

The first sign that the recent study stressed is being overweight. Again, gaining 6-12 pounds increases your risk by 70%. But gaining 12-18 pounds increases the risk by roughly double. Finally, gaining 18-24 pounds puts your risk closest to triple! Other signs are more frequent urination or increased thirst. Nausea, vomiting, and fatigue are other signs. However, it can be

pregnancy. This is why it is
doctor. You doctor might
blood pressure and increased



tough to tell if this is due to your
important to regularly see your
also check you for risks such as high
cholesterol.

What is most important to know?

You are not alone. 200,000 pregnant women get diabetes each year. That is 7% of all pregnancies! There are many ways you can protect yourself. After giving birth, it is important to take a look at a number of things. Taking a look at your diet and exercise are very important. Going to see your doctor for regular visits is crucial too. He or she can be helpful in weight control. It isn't easy, but being mindful of your health before becoming pregnant again can significantly decrease your risk of gestational diabetes.



Additional Resources:

Where can I get more information?

National Institutes of Health: <http://www.nih.gov>

American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/gestational>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: 1-800-370-2943.

Your personal doctor or a dietician can also be a great resource and help you to find community resources.

Key Words:

Diabetes

Pregnancy

Blood Glucose

Prevention

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.