



Screening For Diabetes During Pregnancy

(NAPSA)—About 240,000 of the 4 million women who give birth every year in the United States develop diabetes during their pregnancy, a condition known as gestational diabetes—but it can be prevented. Gestational diabetes usually has no symptoms but can cause negative health effects for the mother and her child. Fortunately, proper screening and treatment can reduce the risk of these health effects for both mom and baby.

Health Concern for Women and Babies

If gestational diabetes is not identified and managed, it can lead to complications during pregnancy and labor. For example, gestational diabetes can cause babies to grow bigger than usual before they are born, making labor and delivery more complicated. A woman with gestational diabetes is also more likely to have the baby before her due date or need a C-section to deliver the baby. Gestational diabetes can also lead to an increased risk of developing pre-eclampsia, a serious condition of very high blood pressure during pregnancy.

Gestational diabetes can cause health problems for women and their babies after delivery. Women with gestational diabetes have an increased risk of developing diabetes later in life. Babies can have health problems shortly after birth, such as low blood sugar, that require hospital care.

Reducing Your Risk Before Pregnancy

All the causes of gestational



Staying healthy before and during your pregnancy is important for both you and your baby.

diabetes are not yet fully understood. However, taking steps to get healthy before getting pregnant can help reduce the risk of developing this condition. This includes maintaining a healthy weight through a balanced diet and regular physical activity, not smoking, and managing any chronic conditions such as high blood pressure with the help of your doctor or nurse.

A Simple but Important Screening Test

Recently, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force reviewed evidence about gestational diabetes to determine who should be screened and at what stage of pregnancy. Based on the evidence, the Task Force recommends that all pregnant women be screened for gestational diabetes after 24 weeks of pregnancy. Screening is important because women with gestational diabetes usually do not have any symptoms and early diagnosis of the condition can help a woman

and her doctor develop a plan to help manage any health problems.

The most common screening test for gestational diabetes is an oral glucose tolerance test. For this test, you will be asked to drink a sugar solution. Then, your blood is tested to see how well your body processes the sugar.

Having a Healthy Pregnancy and Baby

Women with gestational diabetes can have a healthy pregnancy and baby. If you are diagnosed with gestational diabetes, your doctor or midwife will work with you to make a treatment plan to keep you and your baby healthy. This includes diet and physical activity changes to keep blood sugar levels under control, education and counseling, and blood sugar monitoring. If these steps do not control your blood sugar levels, you may need to take insulin or other medicine. You will also need closer medical observation during your pregnancy. Fortunately, monitoring and treatment of gestational diabetes can significantly reduce the risk of health problems for you and your baby.

Protecting Your Health

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force makes evidence-based recommendations on primary care services.

Learn More

For more information on the Task Force and to read the full report on screening for gestational diabetes, visit www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org.