

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

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Healthy eating for gestational diabetes

A patient's guide



Introduction

This information guide will help explain how to keep your blood glucose levels under control during pregnancy. Changes to your diet and regular physical activity both have an important role in helping you keep your blood glucose near to target.

Women with gestational diabetes are advised to aim below the following blood glucose target levels:

- **Fasting - 5.3 mmol/L**
- **1 hour after eating - 7.8 mmol/L**

It's extremely important to keep your blood glucose levels within targets, as this will help to reduce risks to you and your baby.

One of the best ways you can help manage your gestational diabetes is to keep your diet healthy and balanced. This is because the foods you eat are as important as testing your blood glucose and taking prescribed medication if you need it.

The Eatwell plate can help you make steps towards a healthy balanced diet. You can view an interactive version of the Eatwell Guide at:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx

Useful Information

Diabetes UK:

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-the-basics/food-and-diabetes/i-have-gestational-diabetes>

BDA food Facts Sheet:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/pregnancy-diet.html>

Eatwell plate:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide>

Contact us

This leaflet should be used in conjunction with the advice you receive during your pregnancy from your diabetes specialist dietitian. Please don't hesitate to contact the dietitian on 0207 288 5553 if you have any dietary questions or concerns.

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

Example Meal Plan

Breakfast

- 1 slice granary/seeded bread with topping*
- Omelette (add vegetables of choice) and 1 slice granary/seeded bread
- 200g natural Greek yogurt with handful nuts/seeds and handful of berries
- 1 small chapatti with curry (meat/chicken/paneer)
*eggs, cheese, peanut butter, avocado, cooked ham

Lunch

- 2 slices granary/seeded bread with chicken/tuna/cheese/egg and salad
- 1 wholemeal wrap with chicken/tuna/cheese/egg and salad
- 2 small (hand size) chapatti with curry and vegetables/salad
- Chicken and vegetable soup and 1 small bread roll
- Lentil soup with 1 slice granary/seeded bread
- Scrambled eggs with avocado and 2 slices granary/seeded bread

Evening Meal

- ¼ plate (fist size) cooked pasta, beef bolognese and salad
- ¼ plate (fist size) sweet potato with baked fish, onions, peppers, tomatoes
- Fajitas made with 2 small wraps, chicken, onion, peppers, cheese and salad
- ¼ plate (fist size) cooked Basmati rice, curry (meat/chicken/paneer) and vegetables/salad
- Nicoise salad: tuna, egg, green beans, salad and 5-6 small new potatoes
- Stir fry made with tofu, fist-sized portion noodles and vegetables

Tips for managing blood glucose levels

1) Eat 3 regular meals per day

Leaving long gaps between eating can make it harder to control your appetite and blood glucose levels.

2) Avoid sugary foods and drinks

Processed foods especially sugary drinks, snacks and desserts should be avoided.

Avoid adding sugar to foods and drinks. Try low or zero calorie sweeteners instead, also known as artificial sweeteners.

It is not necessary to buy 'diabetic' foods. They can be expensive, high in calories and often contain sweeteners that may cause stomach upset.

3) Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate foods are broken down into glucose which directly affects blood glucose levels. Your body uses these foods for energy.

Carbohydrates

These include:

- Breads, chapatti, roti, pita bread, bagels (anything made with flour)
- Rice, pasta, noodles, cous cous, quinoa, barley.
- Breakfast cereals, cereal bars and crackers
- Starchy vegetables like sweet potato, potato, yam, plantain
- Beans and legumes
- Milk and yogurt
- Sugary foods and drinks

To manage your blood glucose levels, it is important to eat the right **type** and **portion size** of carbohydrate

4) Type of carbohydrate

Some carbohydrates are broken down more slowly which can help manage your blood glucose levels. Glycaemic Index (GI) is a measure of how quickly foods containing carbs affect your blood sugar levels after you eat them.

Food and drinks with a high GI are broken down quickly, causing a rapid rise in glucose levels.

It is important to choose **lower** GI carbohydrates as they are more slowly absorbed into the body.

Healthy Eating

9) Reduce your intake of saturated fats

Fat does not affect your blood glucose directly but if eaten in large amounts it can cause extra weight gain, which can make it more difficult to control your blood glucose levels. Butter, cheese, ghee, lard and palm oil are all high in saturated fat, so swap these for small amounts of olive, rapeseed or sunflower oils and spreads.

10) Keep active!

Research has shown that physical activity after a meal is particularly useful in managing blood glucose levels. Try to do a 20 minute walk after eating.

Regular exercise also will help to keep you fit and prepares you for the birth of your baby.

The most important thing about activity is that you do something that you enjoy.

Before starting or continuing any form of physical activity, always check with your health care professional team.

Healthy Eating

7) Eat a minimum of 2-3 portions of protein foods daily. One portion equals:

- 80g meat (portion similar to a deck of cards)
- 120g fish (portion similar to palm of your hand for white fish, deck of cards for oily fish)
- 2 eggs
- 3-4 tbsp. pulses
- 100g Quorn or tofu (1/2 cup)
- 30g nuts

8) Eat 3 portions of calcium-rich foods daily. One portion equals:

- 200ml milk or fortified alternatives
- 150g yoghurt – natural or greek
- 25g cheese (similar to matchbox size)

Non-dairy foods containing calcium

- Calcium enriched soya products
- Green leafy vegetables
- Tofu
- Almonds
- Beans
- Dahl

Glycaemic Index

GI food swaps	
Instead of...	Try this instead...
Flaked/puffed or sugar coated cereal	No added sugar or nutty Muesli
Soft White Bread	Multi-grain/seeded/rye/sourdough bread
White Pitta	Mixed grain wrap or wholemeal roti
Instant Oats	Traditional rolled oats/jumbo oats
Mashed potato	New or Sweet potato or yam
White rice	Basmati rice/ quinoa, grain and rice blends
Potato crisps	Dry roasted chickpeas
Frozen chips	Pasta or noodles
Watermelon	Apple, peach, berries or fresh cherries

You'll still need to think about your portion sizes. It's the amount of carbs in the meal that will affect your blood sugar levels the most. And not all low GI foods are healthy, so make sure you look at the labels and make a healthy choice.

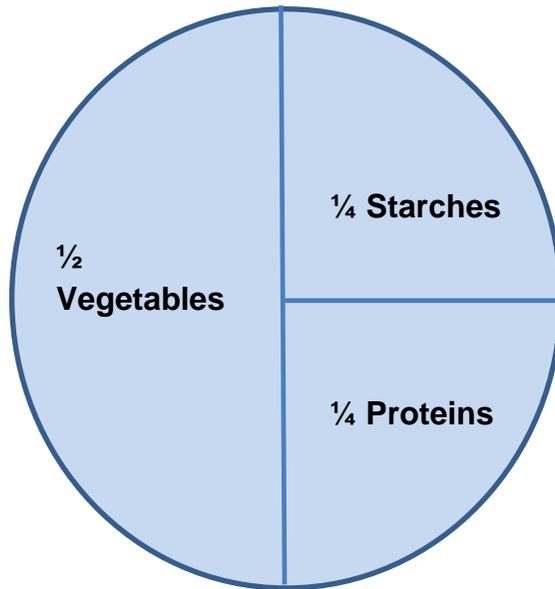
You can find more information about GI online at the Diabetes UK:

www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/enjoy-food/carbohydrates-and-diabetes/glycaemic-index-and-diabetes

Carbohydrate Portions

You may be advised to eat less carbohydrate as large portions can contribute to high blood glucose levels.

Use this portion plate as a guide:



This is only a guide and you may find that these quantities are not exactly right for you. Carbohydrate is an important part of the diet so be careful not to cut it out completely. If you are worried about your carbohydrate portions please ask to speak to your Dietitian.

Healthy Eating

5) Snacks

Snacks may be needed if you are hungry between meals, especially if you have reduced your mealtime carb portions. As a guide we recommend you limit to two or three 10-15g carbohydrate snack portions per day.

Some examples below:

- Unsalted nuts/seeds
- One fruit portion
- 150g natural or greek yogurt
- 2 crackers with cheese
- Vegetable sticks with a tablespoon (tbsp.) of hummus/cream cheese

For more snack options please refer to snack guide.

6) Fruit and Vegetables

- **One portion of vegetables** = 3 tbsp. of cooked vegetables or 1 small bowl of salad
- **One portion of fruit (80g)** = 1 medium orange, 1 small banana or apple or 2 small satsumas, plums or a small handful (approx. 8) grapes

Fruit should be limited to 3 portions per day however vegetables can be eaten freely.