High Blood Sugar in Pregnancy

High blood sugar means there is too much glucose in the blood. You may also hear the term hyperglycemia.

Women who have diabetes and get pregnant need to keep their blood sugar levels in a narrow range, between 60 and 120.

• In the morning when you first wake up, your blood sugar should be 60 to 95.
• Before meals, it should be 60 to 105.
• Two hours after you eat, it should be 60 to 120.

Any time your blood sugar is above 120, it is too high during pregnancy. If blood sugar gets high during pregnancy, it can lead to problems for both you and your baby.

Problems for the baby

• Problems with the heart, spine and other organs not forming well in the early weeks of pregnancy if the mother had high blood sugar at the time she became pregnant.
• Too much sugar from the mother causes the baby to grow too large causing:
  › The baby’s lungs to develop more slowly
  › Risk of early delivery
  › Risk for injury during birth
  › Low blood sugar in the baby at birth
  › Risk for stillborn

Problems for the mother

• If the mother had poorly controlled diabetes before pregnancy with complications to her eyes, kidneys or heart, these could get worse during pregnancy.
• Pre-eclampsia is more common. There is more stress on the kidneys, and this can cause high blood pressure, swelling and early delivery.
• If the baby is large due to high blood sugar, a C-section may be needed at delivery. This puts the mother at more risk of infection and results in a more difficult recovery.
High blood sugar and pregnancy

During pregnancy, your body will need more insulin, especially during the last three months. There are several reasons for high blood sugar. The most common reasons during pregnancy include:

- The hormone changes during pregnancy
- Eating more food than your meal plan allows
- Eating foods high in sugar or high in carbohydrates
- Not taking enough medicine (insulin)
- Missed, skipped or delayed medicine (insulin)
- Stress
- Infection / illness
- Not getting enough exercise

There also may be times when you cannot find a reason for high blood sugar.

Signs of high blood sugar

You may not feel any different when your blood sugar is too high. That is why it is so important that you check your blood sugar level as your doctor or nurse advises. Most pregnant women with diabetes will check their blood sugar 4 to 8 times each day, before meals and 2 hours after eating.

If your blood sugar levels go over 120 more than 3 days in a row and you are following your diet, follow up with your doctor or nurse. You may need to have insulin started or if you are on insulin, your dose may need to be changed.

Signs of high blood sugar may include:

- Extreme thirst
- Feeling moody or grumpy
- Frequent urination
- Vaginal itching or infections
- Increased appetite
- Delayed healing
- Blurred vision
- Numbness in fingers or toes
- Feeling tired or sleepy

How to treat high blood sugar

The best way to treat high blood sugar is by balancing food, exercise and insulin. Review the last couple of days of meal plans, activities, diabetes medicines and your glucose record sheet. Look for any changes that might explain the high sugar.
How to prevent high blood sugar

You can prevent high blood sugar by following your diabetes plan.

• Follow your meal plan.
• Take your insulin as directed.
• Test your blood sugar level and keep a record of the results.
• Follow your activity and exercise routine.
• Contact your doctor if you see patterns of high blood sugar.
• Follow your sick day plan if you are ill.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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