



SCREENING FOR GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Approximately 2-5% of all pregnant women develop gestational diabetes – high blood glucose (sugar) levels that develop during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes usually develops during the second half of pregnancy. This is when the mother's body must increase the amount of nourishment for the growing baby. As the placenta increases in size, hormones are released into the bloodstream which raises the mother's blood glucose (sugar). In response, the pancreas releases extra insulin to help control the blood glucose level. However, in some pregnant women, the pancreas is not able to produce enough insulin. The blood glucose level is above normal and gestational diabetes occurs. Once diagnosed, gestational diabetes is generally controlled with diet. In some cases, insulin may be necessary. In most women, gestational diabetes disappears after the baby is delivered.

Screening for gestational diabetes is recommended for pregnant women at 26-28 weeks gestation. This is the time when the normal changes start to raise the blood glucose (sugar) in susceptible individuals. Persons who had a higher risk of developing gestational diabetes are those with a family history of diabetes, obesity, previous large infant (greater than 9 pounds), previous infant with congenital anomalies, glucose in urine, and previous gestational diabetes.

On the day you are scheduled for your glucose test eat a normal healthy diet prior to your test. The screening consists of drinking 5 ounces of an orange or cola flavored drink which contains a measured amount of glucose. **One hour later, a blood sample will be drawn.** Plan to spend an hour in the clinic (bring a book or work to keep you busy). This test needs to be scheduled in advance, usually at the same time as your 26-28 week OB visit.

If your blood glucose is abnormal, you will have a more specific test to diagnose gestational diabetes called a "3 hour glucose tolerance test (GTT)". This test must be scheduled with the lab at the hospital you plan to delivery your baby. There is no need to change your diet before the test, you need to fast from midnight until you arrive at the lab. A blood sample will be drawn when you arrive and then again after you drink the glucose beverage at hourly intervals for the next 3 hours. You must remain in the lab area for the duration of the test.

If diagnosed with gestational diabetes, careful management is necessary to keep you and your baby healthy. Your physician or nurse practitioner will discuss this further with you at that time.