

Gestational Diabetes Meal Plan

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. If you have gestational diabetes, you and your developing baby are likely to have high blood glucose (too much glucose — or “sugar” — in the blood). This can cause problems for both of you during the pregnancy, at birth, and in the years to come.

Fortunately, there’s a lot you can do to help control your blood glucose and lower health risks. Following a meal plan is one of the most important parts of your treatment.

Your doctor or other healthcare provider (registered dietitian or diabetes educator) will work with you to develop a personalized meal plan. This handout provides a blank plan for you to complete and use — and the information you need to make the most of it.

Meal plan basics

Meal plans for gestational diabetes are built around a few basic ideas:

- **Carbohydrates matter.** All foods contain some combination of carbohydrate, fat, and protein. Fat and protein affect your blood glucose over many hours, but carbohydrate affects it much faster. For this reason, you’ll need to regulate your intake of foods that are rich in carbohydrate (“carbs”). Your healthcare provider will show you how — and your meal plan will help you stay on track.
- **Nutrition matters.** More than ever before, you need to make healthy food choices. Nutritious foods support your baby’s growth and development, help control your gestational diabetes, and keep you feeling good. Your meal plan supports healthy choices.
- **Timing and portions matter.** Controlling your gestational diabetes requires controlling the pattern of your eating. Your meal plan gives you targets for when to eat and how much to eat.

Following your meal plan can help you control your gestational diabetes, nourish your growing baby, and keep you feeling good.



Common questions about gestational diabetes meal plans

Which foods are considered carbohydrates?

For your meal plan, only a few types of foods are counted as carbs — starches, fruits, dairy, and non-starchy vegetables. The Food Finder chart on page 3 gives examples and portion sizes for these types of foods.

Should I aim for a very low carb diet — like the Atkins diet?

No. You (and your baby) need carbohydrates to stay healthy. Follow your meal plan to know when and how much carbohydrate to include in your meals and snacks.

Do I need to count calories?

It depends. Some women with gestational diabetes need to count calories, but many others don’t. Your meal plan will list all of the targets you need to aim for — and your healthcare provider can answer any questions.

How do I know if my eating plan is working to control my gestational diabetes?

A healthcare provider will show you how to test your blood glucose several times a day. Your testing results will show how well your gestational diabetes is controlled and whether your treatment should be adjusted. You’ll also be checked during your regular prenatal visits.

Six steps

Your meal plan will give specific targets for the whole day and for each meal and snack. But you may not always have your plan to refer to. So it's good to know that by following six simple steps, you can help control your blood glucose levels:

- 1 Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.** Eat about every 2 to 3 hours. Spreading your carbohydrates evenly throughout the day helps keep your blood glucose stable.
- 2 In every meal and snack, include some healthy protein.** This also helps even out your blood glucose. What's more, protein helps you feel satisfied and full of energy throughout the day.
- 3 Eat a very small breakfast, with a similar mid-morning snack about 2 hours later.** When you have gestational diabetes, your blood glucose tends to be high in the morning. To offset this, your meal plan will probably include fewer carbs at breakfast than at lunch or dinner. For example, your plan may specify a breakfast that includes one milk serving, one starch serving, and some protein.
- 4 Choose high-fiber foods.** Good sources include whole-grain breads and cereals, fresh and frozen vegetables, and beans. Fruits are also a good source of fiber — most plans include fruit in afternoon or evening meals and snacks.
- 5 Watch out for sugar and concentrated sweets.** Sweets raise your blood glucose quickly and significantly — without providing much nutritional value. So do the following:
 - Don't drink fruit juice, and get your fruit servings later in the day (not at breakfast). Although fruits are a healthy source of carbohydrate, their carbs are easily absorbed and tend to raise blood glucose levels quickly.
 - Avoid regular soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, nectar, regular Kool-Aid, Hi-C. High-carbohydrate drinks like these raise your blood glucose quickly.
 - Limit desserts such as ice cream, pies, cakes, cookies, and so on. (These foods often have large amounts of table sugar, honey, or other sweeteners such as sucrose, fructose, corn syrup, dextrose, molasses, or fruit juices.)
 - Read labels carefully and check them for total carbohydrates per serving.

6 Be careful about fat, especially if you're having excess weight gain. Here are some tips:

- Buy lean protein foods, such as poultry, roast beef, ham, and fish. Limit lunchmeat, bacon, sausage, and hot dogs.
- Remove all visible fat by removing the skin of poultry and trimming fat from meat.
- Bake, broil, steam, boil, or grill foods.
- Avoid frying. If you do fry foods, use nonstick pans, vegetable oil spray, or small amounts (1 to 2 teaspoons) of oil.
- Use skim or low-fat (1%) milk and dairy products.
- Limit or avoid adding extra fat, such as butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise, avocados, cream, cream cheese, salad dressing, or nuts.
- Stay away from convenience foods. These are often higher in carbohydrate, fat, and sodium.
- Avoid instant noodles, canned soup, instant potatoes, frozen meals, and packaged foods.

...and don't forget

- **Follow the rest of your gestational diabetes treatment plan.** Your meal plan may be just one part of your treatment. Follow your healthcare team's advice for any daily testing, exercise, or medication.
- **Keep taking your daily prenatal vitamin as directed by your doctor or midwife.**
- **Don't drink alcohol.** No amount of alcohol is considered safe for a developing baby.
- **Stay in touch.** Contact your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns about your meal plan or your pregnancy. Keep your appointments for monthly prenatal visits with your doctor or midwife.
- **Enjoy your pregnancy!** Remember that most babies born to women with gestational diabetes are healthy. Follow your treatment plan, try not to worry, and look forward to meeting your baby.

Food Finder

Wondering how a certain food fits into your meal plan? What a serving looks like? How to get the most nutrition out of what you eat? This chart can help.

STARCHES • Each of the servings below contains about **15 grams of carbohydrates**. Starches include bread, rice, pasta — and starchy vegetables like beans, peas, corn, and potatoes.

Good sources of minerals, B vitamins, fiber

- To get the most good from these foods:
 - Make most of your grains **whole grains**, like whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice.
 - Eat more **peas and beans**.
 - Choose **low-fat, low-salt, and low-sugar** starches.



FRUITS • Each of the servings below contains about **15 grams of carbohydrate**. Fruits include fresh, frozen, dried, and canned fruits — as well as fruit juices (in small amounts).

Good sources of vitamins A & C, minerals, fiber

- To get the most good from these foods:
 - Eat the edible peelings of fruits to get the most **fiber**.
 - Choose fruits **without added sugar**, sweeteners, or syrups.



MILK • Each of the servings below contains about **12 grams of carbohydrate**. Milk, soy milk, and yogurt are in this group.

Good sources of protein, calcium, vitamins A & D

- To get the most good from these foods:
 - Always choose **nonfat or low-fat** milk and yogurt.
 - Choose **unsweetened** milk, soy milk, and yogurt — or versions flavored with artificial sweetener.
 - Drink **lactose-free** versions if you need to.



NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES • Each of the servings below contains about **5 grams of carbohydrate**. Non-starchy vegetables — like broccoli and carrots — are lower in carbohydrates and calories.

Good sources of vitamins A & C, folate, fiber

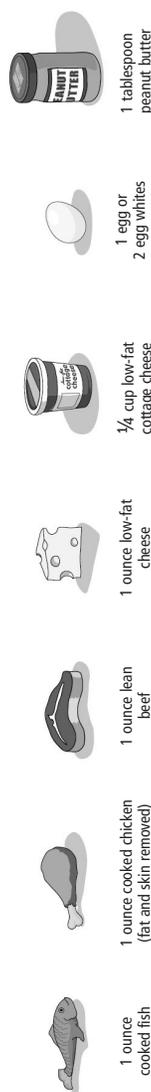
- To get the most good from these foods:
 - Eat **fresh or frozen** vegetables more often than canned vegetables.
 - Buy and prepare vegetables **without sauces, fats, or salt**.
 - Eat more **dark green, orange, and yellow** vegetables.



MEAT AND OTHER PROTEIN-RICH FOODS • Each of the servings below contains **0 grams of carbohydrate and about 7 grams of protein**. Fish, poultry, meat, eggs, cheese, and tofu are in this group.

Good sources of iron, zinc, B vitamins

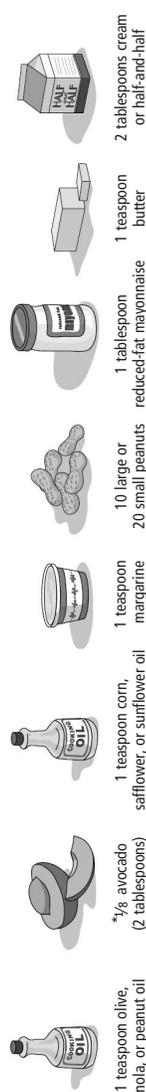
- To get the most good from these foods:
 - Eat **fish more often**.
 - Choose **lean cuts** of meat and **trim excess fat** from poultry — and keep servings about the size of a deck of cards.
 - Choose **fat-free or low-fat** cheese.
 - Instead of frying — **bake, broil, or roast** meats.



OILS AND FATS • Each of the servings below contains **0 grams of carbohydrate and about 5 grams of fat**. Vegetable oils, some nuts, and saturated fats from animals (butter, bacon) are in this group.

Help the body run smoothly, provide flavor and texture

- To get the most good from these foods, read labels and:
 - **Most often**, choose monounsaturated fats and oils.*
 - **Less often**, choose polyunsaturated fats and oils.
 - **Limit or avoid** saturated fats and trans fats.



My gestational diabetes MEAL PLAN

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

Facility: _____

Remember:

15 grams of carbohydrate = 1 serving of carbohydrate

MY DAILY TARGETS:

- **Carbohydrate:** _____ grams per day (_____ servings)
- **Protein:** _____ grams per day (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)
- **Fat:** _____ grams per day (_____ servings)
- **Calories:** _____

When	What and How Much	Menu Ideas
BREAKFAST at about _____AM <i>Test your blood glucose before breakfast. Also test at these times:</i> _____	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	
MID-MORNING SNACK at about _____ AM	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	
LUNCH at about _____ AM/PM	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	
MID-AFTERNOON SNACK at about _____ PM	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	
DINNER at about _____ PM	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	
EVENING SNACK at about _____ PM	Carbohydrate: _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____ Protein: _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings) Fat: _____ grams (_____ servings)	