

I have diabetes. Can I still have a baby?

If you have diabetes, you can still have a baby. To have a healthy baby and a safe pregnancy, you will need to take care of yourself before and during pregnancy.



Will I have trouble getting pregnant?

If your diabetes is in good control, you can get pregnant with no more trouble than a woman without diabetes. Once your blood sugar is under control and you have stopped birth control, you should be able to become pregnant within one year.

When should I stop my birth control pills?

If you are taking birth control pills, you need to talk to your doctor about the best time to stop. Most often birth control pills are stopped several months before you become pregnant. While you are waiting for the pill effects to fade, you must use other means of birth control such as condoms or diaphragm.

Who will take care of me during my pregnancy?

Once you decide you want to become pregnant, you should find a doctor who has experience in caring for pregnant women with diabetes. Your pregnancy will require a special team to give the best care. Your diabetes pregnancy team may include an eye doctor, a diabetes doctor, a dietitian, and a diabetes educator, as well as your family doctor or obstetrician. You may need a hospital that can do special tests.

Should I see my doctor even before I get pregnant?

Before you get pregnant it is important that your blood sugar be in the normal range for at least three months. You should measure your blood sugar at home. The average blood sugar test that your doctor will do should also be normal. Normal blood sugars will increase your chances of becoming pregnant. Normal blood sugars also help prevent miscarriage and birth defects.

Your doctor will check for problems related to diabetes like high blood pressure, kidney disease or thyroid disease. Pregnancy can make diabetic eye disease worse. You may need to visit an eye doctor who will check your eyes.

What else do I need to do?

If you are smoking or drinking alcohol, you need to stop. If you are not taking the vitamin folic acid, you should talk to your doctor about starting. This is a vitamin that will reduce the chance of your baby having spinal birth defects. You should take it for at least four months before getting pregnant. You need to take good care of yourself to get better blood sugar control. This means that you need to learn how to eat, exercise, and take medicine, if needed, to control your blood sugar.

What should my blood sugar level be?

Before pregnancy your blood sugar before meals should be 70-100 mg/dl. One hour after meals it should be less than 140 mg/dl. Two hours after meals it should be less than 120 mg/dl. These targets will be lower once you become pregnant.

If I take Insulin will I need to take more after I get pregnant?

To keep your blood sugars normal during pregnancy, you may need to take more insulin. You will also need to measure your blood sugar at home more often. The amount of insulin and the number of shots that you will need will depend on your blood sugar levels at home. Your doctor and/or diabetes educator can help you find the right dose and time.

If I only take pills to treat my diabetes, do I need to take insulin if I get pregnant?

You will need to take insulin during your pregnancy. The pills used to treat diabetes are stopped when you are planning to have a baby. Your doctor will help you switch from pills to insulin.

Should I keep tight control of my diabetes during the whole pregnancy?

Tight control early lowers the risk of birth defects. Tight control during the whole pregnancy reduces the risks of miscarriage, the baby getting too big or too small, premature birth, or sudden death of the baby.

I already have good control of my diabetes. Will I need to change treatment?

The hormones of pregnancy and “morning sickness” may make your blood sugars harder to control during pregnancy. Blood sugar checks at home and at the hospital will tell you and your doctor if your treatment needs to change. Insulin needs will change during pregnancy. After the baby is born, your insulin dose will likely return to what it was before pregnancy.

Will I have problems with my pregnancy because I have diabetes?

You may have heard that you should not have a baby because you have diabetes. At one time that was true. Today, with good care, you can safely have a baby if you have diabetes. It is true that you have a higher risk of problems than a woman without diabetes. Your health care team will help you reduce this risk to the lowest level possible. Today you can check your blood sugar and ketones (a special urine test) at home. You can take insulin several times a day and keep your blood sugars normal. Your baby can be checked several ways to make sure he or she is doing well. If need arises, your baby can even be delivered early to avoid the risk of a big baby.

Will Insulin and artificial sweeteners harm my baby?

Insulin in the mother does not reach the baby. High blood sugar can reach the baby and cause harm. Artificial sweeteners are thought to be safe in pregnancy. If you have PKU (a genetic disease present at birth), you should not use the sweetener NutraSweet© (aspartame).

Will my baby get diabetes from me?

Your baby will not be born with diabetes. If you have type 1 diabetes (tends to start in childhood), there is very little chance that your child will ever get diabetes. Type 2 diabetes tends to run in families. If you or your husband have type 2 diabetes, your child has a higher risk of getting diabetes when he/she is an adult. If you do not know what type of diabetes you have, ask your doctor.

Should I stop exercising when I get pregnant?

Exercise is healthy for you and your baby. Your blood sugar may react differently to exercise during pregnancy. Also, you may not have the signs of low blood sugar that you are used to. You will need to check your blood sugar before and after exercise to look for blood sugars that are too low or too high.

You may have to change the way you exercise. Your sense of balance may be different because of your size and because of joint changes. Your doctor and/or diabetes educator will help answer your questions about exercise.

Remember...

You can learn how to take care of yourself to have a safe pregnancy and a healthy baby. Your diabetes health care team will help you.

Brochure developed by Dr. Sukanya Somasunder. ©1998
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