



CHECKLIST

Planning for pregnancy after gestational diabetes

If you have had gestational diabetes and you want to start trying for another pregnancy, it is a good idea to plan ahead and look after your health before you become pregnant. This will help you and your baby to be healthy.

Many of the risk factors for gestational diabetes are things you cannot change, such as your family history or your age. But there are also things you may be able to change. Aiming for a healthy weight, being active and eating well, may help reduce your risk of getting gestational diabetes again. These changes will also mean you are less likely to get type 2 diabetes.

It is a good idea to start planning for pregnancy at least 3-6 months before you start trying for a baby. This gives you time to have the health checks you need and make any healthy changes to your lifestyle.

Use this checklist to help you plan for your next pregnancy.

Use reliable contraception while planning your pregnancy

Contraception allows you to choose the timing of pregnancy that is best suited to you. It also gives you a chance to have the health checks you need before trying for a baby. There are many different types of contraception. Some work better than others.

Only stop using contraception when you are ready to start trying for a baby. Ask your GP for advice.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Talk to your general practitioner (GP) about the most **reliable contraception** that will be **best for you**.

See your GP for pregnancy planning advice

Planning for pregnancy gives you and your baby the best start. This means you are less likely to have health problems during pregnancy. Your GP can help with pregnancy planning advice.

Before you start trying for a baby

- See your GP to discuss **planning** for your **next pregnancy**.
- Have all your **medications** checked to see if they are **safe to take during pregnancy**. This includes prescription medication and over-the-counter medicines from your chemist or supermarket.
- Have your **blood pressure** checked.
- Start taking a **pregnancy supplement** containing **folic acid** (500 micrograms/day), ideally 3 months before becoming pregnant. Your doctor may recommend a higher dose (5mg/day) if your weight is in the obese range.
- Start taking a **pregnancy supplement** containing **iodine** (150 micrograms/day). If you have thyroid problems talk to your GP first.
- Ask your GP to check that all of your **immunisations** are up-to-date.
- Make an appointment for a **dental check-up** and ask your dentist about keeping your teeth and gums healthy during pregnancy.
- If you smoke, ask your GP for help and support to **quit smoking**.
- Have a **diabetes check**.

Have a diabetes check

Women who have had gestational diabetes are more likely to get type 2 diabetes. You can have type 2 diabetes, but not know it. This can lead to health problems during pregnancy for you and your baby. This is why regular diabetes checks are important.

Your GP may suggest a diabetes check every 1-2 years if they know you are planning another pregnancy. If you have not had this diabetes check, your GP can organise this before you start trying for a baby.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Ask your GP for a **diabetes check**. This check is usually an oral glucose tolerance test, which is the same check most women had to diagnose gestational diabetes.

If the diabetes check shows that you have pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes, ask your GP for referrals to diabetes health professionals. They will help you look after your diabetes and prepare for pregnancy.



Aim for a healthy weight

Being in the healthy weight range before pregnancy means your overall health will be better, it is easier to become pregnant and your pregnancy is more likely to be healthy. A healthy weight also means you are less likely to get type 2 diabetes.

If your weight is above the healthy range, even a small amount of weight loss between pregnancies means that you are less likely to get gestational diabetes again.

For all women, it is important to avoid weight gain between pregnancies.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Aim to be as close as possible to a **healthy weight**. If you are overweight, aim to be less than the weight you were before your last pregnancy.
- Talk to your GP about **healthy weight gain** targets **during pregnancy**.



Make healthy food choices

Eating well can help you go into your next pregnancy in the best possible health and manage your weight between pregnancies.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Plan **healthy meals and snacks** for the whole family.
- Eat at least **2 serves of fruit** and **5 serves of vegetables*** each day.
- Choose **wholegrain and high-fibre** breads, cereals and grains*, and try to include legumes (such as lentils or chickpeas) in your meals.
- Choose **low fat** dairy products, lean meats, and skinless chicken.
- Use small amounts of **healthy fats** such as olive oil, avocado, unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Avoid** foods and drinks high in sugar.
- Limit** takeaways and fast food.
- Avoid** large serve sizes at meals.
- Stop** drinking alcohol.

* If you are breastfeeding, extra serves of vegetables, breads, cereals and grains may be needed.

Planning a healthy weekly menu, getting fruit and vegetables delivered and freezing leftovers can make it easier for you and your family to eat well.

Be active every day

Being active can improve your fitness, energy levels and emotional well-being. It can help you manage your weight between pregnancies, which can reduce your risk of getting gestational diabetes again. Physical activity can also help reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes

Making time for physical activity can be challenging with small children, especially if you are not getting enough sleep or feeling low in energy. Try to add activity in your day such as walking to the park or shops, active play with your children or joining an active mother's group.

If you cannot find 30 minutes for physical activity in your busy day, try breaking this into three 10-minute blocks of activity.

Talk to your GP for advice on physical activity before, during and after pregnancy. Your GP may suggest that you see an exercise physiologist or physiotherapist.



Get checked for gestational diabetes early in pregnancy

Your doctor will suggest that you get checked for gestational diabetes early in all future pregnancies. This may be a simple blood test when you first find out that you are pregnant. An oral glucose tolerance test will be recommended at around 16-20 weeks of pregnancy.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Try to **move more** every day and spend **less time sitting**.
- Aim for at least **30 minutes of moderate physical activity** on most days of the week, such as brisk walking, swimming, aqua fitness classes, stationary cycling, active housework or walking with a pram.
- Do **muscle strengthening** activity on at least 2 days each week, such as exercises using hand weights, resistance bands or body weight exercises.
- Find out how to do **pelvic floor exercises** before, during and after pregnancy.

Before you start trying for a baby

- Ask your health professionals about **early testing** for gestational diabetes.

If you have type 2 diabetes, you will not need a check for gestational diabetes.

Plan to breastfeed

Breastfeeding is good for your baby and may help reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes. Sometimes breastfeeding can be difficult. If you had problems with breastfeeding in your last pregnancy, it is a good idea to get some support beforehand from your midwife, doctor, or a lactation consultant.

Planning a pregnancy is a great time to focus on taking care of yourself and your health. You can use this checklist to help you talk about pregnancy planning with your health professionals.

This information is intended as a guide only. It should not replace individual medical advice. If you have any concerns about your health, or further questions, you should contact your health professional.