



SWEET PREGNANCY?

DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER,

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR DOCTOR.

WHAT AFTER ... GESTATIONAL DIABETES

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Z zoetzwanger
Diabetes Liga

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WHAT IS GESTATIONAL DIABETES?

The phrase “**gestational diabetes**” refers to having abnormally high blood sugar levels during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes is one of the main complications of pregnancy and occurs in almost 1 in 10 pregnant women in Flanders.

Certain factors such as overweight, age and heredity (familial type 2 diabetes) undoubtedly play a major role. However, we cannot predict exactly when and in which women gestational diabetes will develop. This is because a number of women have no obvious risk factors.

HOW DOES GESTATIONAL DIABETES OCCUR?

Pregnancy is a very busy time for your body. During any healthy pregnancy, the placenta produces many hormones that aid the baby’s development.

However, those same **pregnancy hormones** also have a downside: they work against normal metabolic processes, especially in the second half of pregnancy.

So to some extent they prevent insulin from working. The hormone insulin is like the key that lets glucose, or blood sugar, into our cells. Because the action of insulin is partially prevented, suddenly much more of the hormone is needed to let the same amount of blood sugar into the cells. When your body can no longer handle

the increased demand for insulin, blood sugar accumulates in the blood faster – this is known as “hyperglycaemia” – and gestational diabetes develops.

Prolonged high levels of sugar in the blood are harmful to your body and that of your child. Gestational diabetes therefore needs to be treated.

- usually, a **balanced diet and sufficient exercise** are enough to control blood sugar.
- **sometimes, however, additional insulin** is needed to prevent problems during pregnancy and at birth.

GESTATIONAL DIABETES, A WINDOW ON YOUR FUTURE



Gestational diabetes exposes your body's weaknesses, as it were, when otherwise you might not notice them at all. Women with gestational diabetes usually have a pre-existing problem of poor insulin action, which first manifests itself during pregnancy.

In most cases, blood sugar returns to normal after the birth. But don't forget that this is an important alarm signal from your body. **30 to 50% of women who go through gestational diabetes develop type 2 diabetes after around 5 to 10 years!**

This applies not only when you need insulin while treating your gestational diabetes. Women who are not really affected by gestational diabetes, or who easily achieve adequate control through an appropriate diet and sufficient exercise, are also at risk. So you have to be especially vigilant.

**30 TO 50% OF WOMEN WHO GO THROUGH
GESTATIONAL DIABETES DEVELOP TYPE 2 DIABETES
AFTER AROUND 5 TO 10 YEARS!**

ONE DIABETES IS NOT LIKE ANOTHER

In Belgium, it is estimated that around 1 in 10 of the adult population have some form of diabetes.

In addition to gestational diabetes, we distinguish two main forms: type 1 and type 2.



Type 1 diabetes

Occurs mostly in **CHILDREN or YOUNG ADULTS**
FEWER THAN 10% of all people with diabetes
Cannot be prevented



Type 2 diabetes

Mainly **FROM THE AGE OF 40**
MORE THAN 90% of all people with diabetes
Can be partially prevented
Clear link with **UNHEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND OVERWEIGHT**



If you have experienced **gestational diabetes**, you are especially more likely to develop type 2 diabetes in the years to follow. Diabetes is a serious condition that requires your lifelong attention.

With current treatment options, diabetes can be kept well under control.

Nevertheless, the chronic complications of diabetes can greatly reduce quality of life.

If diabetes is treated early enough and properly controlled, these complications can be prevented.

In any case, be alert for the typical symptoms of diabetes: excessive thirst and frequent urination, fatigue, recurrent infections. These are not always as pronounced in type 2 diabetes. Due to its dormant course, type 2 diabetes is often discovered years too late, when a lot of damage has already been done to tissues and organs. Hence, it is important to give it proper attention in good time if you are at high risk, such as after gestational diabetes.

DIABETES, CONSEQUENCES AND COMPLICATIONS

Early detection and treatment is essential



Eye disorders



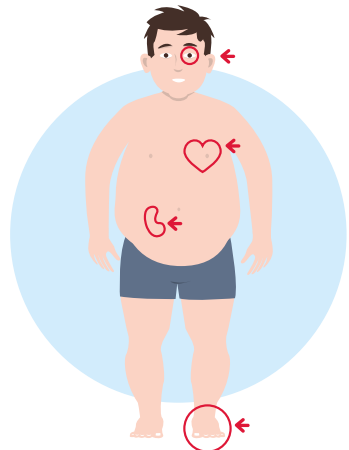
Cardiovascular disorders



Kidney problems



Foot problems



On average, 30% of individuals already have complications at diagnosis.

YOUR OWN PLAN OF ACTION

Specifically, the following messages are very important for anyone who has had gestational diabetes:

1. GET YOUR BLOOD SUGAR CHECKED REGULARLY BY YOUR GP

After giving birth, your GP is the most appropriate person to keep an eye on you. **Always let your GP know that you have had gestational diabetes.** You have a major responsibility yourself!

Regular blood tests are necessary to be able to quickly detect a new imbalance in your blood sugar levels and the development of diabetes.

The following are therefore recommended:

- schedule an initial test a few weeks after giving birth with your diabetes team. Ideally around 8-12 weeks after you give birth, unless you are still breastfeeding. If so, you may be asked by the diabetes team to postpone this test until you have stopped breastfeeding.
- then visit your GP annually to have your fasting blood sugar levels checked.
- Are you planning to get pregnant again? Then an extra check-up is definitely recommended. After all, getting pregnant with untreated diabetes poses a risk to your child.



2. LIVE A HEALTHY LIFE IN ALL AREAS

It has been scientifically proven that type 2 diabetes really can be prevented in people at high risk of developing diabetes, such as after gestational diabetes.

On the following pages you will discover what actions you can take to reduce your future risk of diabetes and also to reduce the risk of future gestational diabetes.

AVOIDING TYPE 2 DIABETES

Healthy lifestyle



healthy diet

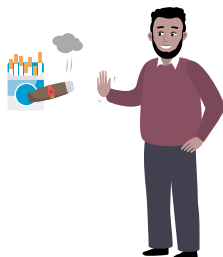
A healthy lifestyle helps prevent type 2 diabetes FOR MORE THAN HALF OF ALL PEOPLE.



physical exercise
limit sedentary behaviour



mental well-being



no smoking



sufficient sleep

HEALTHY AND VARIED DIET

TIPS



- Have plant-based products as the basis of every meal.
- Limit your intake of animal products.
- Drink mainly water.
- Avoid highly processed products as much as possible.
- Mix things up and find alternatives: eating the same thing every day quickly becomes monotonous. Play around with your healthy diet.
- Eat regularly and at set times, together with others.
- Eat mindfully and in moderation.
- Adapt your environment: design your environment so that the healthy choice is obvious and the unhealthy one becomes more difficult.
- Work step by step. Do you have to change your entire diet overnight? No, every little improvement is a step forward.
- Enjoy what you eat! Above all, make sure food remains a celebration. Pamper yourself daily with tasty, healthy food.



If you want more tips on healthy eating, be sure to take a look at the recommendations at www.gezondleven.be.

FOOD TRIANGLE

**GEZOND
LEVEN**

gezondleven.be

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ENOUGH EXERCISE

AND ... ACTION!

- Make sure you get enough exercise.
The aim is to have at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. The choice is yours: will it be brisk walking, swimming, fitness, dancing, or something else? Build up slowly until you reach the desired level.
- Spend less time sitting still. Stand up regularly or go for a walk if you have to sit for a long time. Introduce more exercise into your life little by little. Because any amount of exercise is better than nothing.
- You don't necessarily have to complete an intensive fitness programme every week. Sometimes simple steps are enough to gradually bring more exercise into your life. Limit the use of the car or park the car a certain way away and cover the remaining distance on foot. Use the stairs instead of the escalator or lift. Be creative!
- Feel good. Give yourself a pat on the back after a healthy day. Think of a reward for yourself that fits into your healthy routine.
- As a young mother, you're always busy. All your care and attention is focused on your child, which is a normal reflex. But it's important to take some time for yourself once in a while. Discuss this with your partner or those closest to you. After all, it's your health that's at stake!

Want more tips on how to fit enough exercise into your life or how to limit sitting still? Be sure to take a look at www.gezondleven.be.



HEALTHY WEIGHT

DOES MY WEIGHT POSE AN ADDITIONAL RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES?

Overweight is one of the risk factors that help determine whether you will also develop type 2 diabetes after your gestational diabetes. Fortunately, a healthy lifestyle can help reduce this risk. A healthy lifestyle will not only reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes, it will also help you reach a healthy weight, which in turn will also reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes.

To get a better idea of whether your weight might increase your risk of type 2 diabetes, you can do two things:

- Calculate your BMI (body-mass index):** this is your weight (in kilograms (kg)) divided by the square of your height (in metres (m)).

$BMI = \text{weight (in kg)} / \text{height (in m)} \times \text{height (in m)}$

For example, if you weigh 70 kg and your height is 160 cm, your BMI is: $70 / (1.6 \times 1.6) = 27$.

Normal weight	$BMI < 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$
Overweight	$25 \leq BMI < 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$
Obesity	$BMI \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$

- Measure your waist:** this is a good indicator of the presence of fat in the abdominal area. An excessively large waist, even with a "normal" BMI, increases the risk of type 2 diabetes and other conditions, such as cardiovascular problems. Measuring your waist is very easy using a tape measure: measure the circumference of your stomach halfway between your lowest ribs and your hips.

Increased health risk	waist ≥ 80 cm
Severely increased health risk	waist ≥ 88 cm

Just keep in mind that an excessively high, low or even normal weight is not always necessarily healthy or unhealthy. A lot depends on your lifestyle. But other factors such as bone structure and muscle mass can also affect your weight ...

Try to make an honest assessment for yourself, or discuss with your doctor what a "healthy weight" means for you.

I'M CARRYING A FEW EXTRA KILOS ... HOW DO YOU WORK TOWARDS A HEALTHY WEIGHT?

Be aware that there is no magic bullet. You can achieve a lot just with a healthy lifestyle. Even a small weight loss as a result of this healthy lifestyle can have a major effect on your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Here are some tips to work on your weight in a healthy way.

- Breastfeed! Breastfeeding offers many benefits for the health of both mother and child and in both the short and long term. So it will lower your risk of type 2 diabetes. In addition, it can help you get back to your pre-pregnancy weight more easily. Caution: don't start a strict slimming diet while breastfeeding! When breastfeeding, you need more energy than normal to ensure you produce enough milk. If you have any questions about this, don't hesitate to contact a midwife or lactation consultant. During pregnancy, they can assist you in preparing your breastfeeding journey. After the birth, they are there to offer guidance and advice.
- It may help to take a look at your diet and eating habits. When doing so, be honest with yourself ... Do you have a varied diet? Do you listen to your gut to decide how much to eat? Do you make time for breakfast every day? Do you eat at regular intervals throughout the day?
- You don't have to starve yourself at all to reach your goal, quite the opposite. Go for adjustments that you can sustain over the long term and that fit within a healthy lifestyle. This way you can lose 5-10% weight without any yo-yo effect, which in itself will have huge health benefits.
- Exercise helps you stay fit and feel good. It will also lower your risk of type 2 diabetes. Therefore, also exercise for at least 30 minutes a day at moderate intensity, e.g. brisk walking, swimming, cycling, etc. Don't start exercising too quickly, too intensely or for too long. Build up slowly after your pregnancy. Under expert guidance, if necessary.
- Finally, it is especially important that you make adjustments that you can sustain and fit within a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, keep a realistic target in mind and work in small steps. If necessary, you can call on the expert advice of a dietician, a "Bewegen op Verwijzing" coach, a physiotherapist and/or a psychologist.

**LOWER YOUR RISK OF TYPE
2 DIABETES THROUGH A
HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.**

PREVENTING DIABETES IS TEAMWORK



Congratulations! You've reached the end of this brochure.

You've already taken the first initiative yourself. But preventing diabetes is not something you do on your own. As already indicated, your GP is your medical coach and point of contact. You can expand your personal team still further.

One or two suggestions:

- Engage a dietician: get professional guidance to adjust your diet. Find a dietician near you at www.vbvd.be
- The whole family joins in: involve your child(ren) and partner in your plan of action – active & healthy together!
- Exercise in a group: find people around you who want to exercise with you, join a sports club or take part in a dance course or other group activity.
- The midwife can assist you during your pregnancy, but even after the birth the midwife is an important point of contact. Contact a midwife to prepare your breastfeeding plan together. Feel free to do this while you are pregnant. You can always find a midwife at www.vroedvrouwen.be.
- If you smoke, you can also always consult a stop-smoking counsellor. They will guide you through this. See www.tabakstop.be



RETAIL PRICE: €35
Zoet Zwanger promo code
"lekkerkokenzoetzwanger"



Indulge in a culinary treat with no fewer than **200 healthy and delicious recipes**. The recipes are composed of nutritious and colourful ingredients, **suitable for people with diabetes, allowing you to put delicious meals on the table in no time!**

**AVAILABLE
IN STORE AND
AT SHOP.DIABETES.BE**



"Gezond & Actief Leven" magazine

The Diabetes Liga has been pushing for **"prevention of type 2 diabetes"** in Flanders for several years now. It does this through a lot of initiatives and projects, such as Zoet Zwanger and HALT2Diabetes. The current offering has been expanded with a brand new magazine **"Gezond & Actief Leven"**.

With this magazine, the Diabetes Liga aims to support **people at increased risk of type 2 diabetes** in a positive way by informing them. "Gezond & Actief Leven" offers practical tools on nutrition, exercise, stopping smoking, etc. The Diabetes Liga aims to inspire people to be proactive and healthy in life.

Want to read more? It is possible to sign up for a **FREE subscription**. You will then receive "Gezond & Actief Leven" twice a year in your letterbox or mailbox. Visit www.diabetespreventie.be or scan the QR code.

Do you have any **ideas or suggestions** for a next edition? These are of course very welcome! Feel free to email them to preventie@diabetes.be





30 TO 50% OF WOMEN WHO GO THROUGH GESTATIONAL DIABETES DEVELOP TYPE 2 DIABETES AFTER AROUND 5 TO 10 YEARS!

LET YOUR GP KNOW YOU HAVE HAD GESTATIONAL DIABETES AND GET YOUR BLOOD SUGAR CHECKED REGULARLY BY YOUR GP.

LOWER YOUR RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES THROUGH A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.

An initiative of:



Partners:

