



WE CAN BE STRONGER THAN DIABETES

Diabetes and Pregnancy: Gestational Diabetes

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Announcer] Diabetes is often detected in women during their childbearing years, and poor control of blood sugar in a woman with diabetes during pregnancy can affect the health of both the woman and her unborn child. Our guest today is Jenny Williams, Nurse Practitioner and Epidemiologist with CDC’s Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Jenny works in birth defects prevention and is going to help us understand more about gestational diabetes. Jenny, what is gestational diabetes?

[Jenny Williams] A woman who did not have diabetes previously can develop “gestational diabetes” during pregnancy. This usually happens around 24 to 28 weeks. Gestational diabetes happens when the woman can’t make enough insulin during pregnancy. Insulin helps change the sugar in our blood to energy. Without enough insulin, sugar builds up in the blood and can cause problems.

[Announcer] Now, how does gestational diabetes affect the pregnant woman?

[Jenny Williams] The most common problem in a woman with gestational diabetes is having a baby that is larger than normal. A large baby might need to be delivered 2-3 weeks early or be delivered by cesarean section or both. It takes longer for a woman to recover from childbirth after having a C-section.

[Announcer] How does gestational diabetes affect a developing baby?

[Jenny Williams] Like I said earlier, the most common effect of gestational diabetes is that the baby grows extra large, and in the infant, this can cause injury to the baby during delivery.

[Announcer] Why should a woman with gestational diabetes be concerned about controlling her blood sugar?

[Jenny Williams] If a woman with gestational diabetes keeps her blood sugar in tight control during pregnancy, she can reduce her chance of having problems.

[Announcer] Okay then, tell me Jenny, what happens after delivery to a baby whose mother had gestational diabetes?

[Jenny Williams] Well, the first thing to understand is that most babies are born healthy. Some babies can have low blood sugar after birth, but in most cases this is caught quickly and treated. The baby, however, will have an increased chance of being obese and developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

[Announcer] What happens to a mom who had gestational diabetes after she delivers?

[Jenny Williams] Most of the time, gestational diabetes goes away. But, in a few women, it doesn't. And, if that happens, the woman is said to have converted to type 2 diabetes. A woman whose diabetes does not go away after delivery will need to manage her diabetes for the rest of her life. And this is really important if she gets pregnant again. Also, a woman who had gestational diabetes, even if it goes away, is more likely to get type 2 diabetes later on in life.

[Announcer] How can a woman have a healthy pregnancy?

[Jenny Williams] Well, we are talking about gestational diabetes today, but what I'm about to go over is important for all women.

First – A woman should plan her pregnancy. It's very important for a woman to get her body ready before she becomes pregnant.

Second – She should see her doctor before becoming pregnant. The doctor will go over her health history and advise her about things she needs to do or be aware of during her pregnancy.

Third – She needs to take a vitamin with folic acid daily and eat healthy foods. Talking with a dietitian can help with this.

Fourth – She also needs to exercise regularly. Exercise helps us to balance food intake. A woman should begin a regular exercise routine before she gets pregnant and stick with it during and after the pregnancy.

And finally, if a woman gets pregnant and develops gestational diabetes, she might need to take these actions in addition to watching her diet and exercise:

She needs to monitor and control her blood sugar, take her medications on time, and treat low blood sugar quickly.

[Announcer] Well Jenny, why go through all this trouble?

[Jenny Williams] A woman with gestational diabetes who gets and keeps her blood sugar in control is more likely to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby – and that's really what every mother wants.

[Announcer] Well Jenny, thank you for joining us today. For more information on diabetes and pregnancy, visit www.cdc.gov and type "diabetes and pregnancy" in the search box or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.