



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Diabetes During Pregnancy

National Birth Defects Prevention Month and Folic Acid Awareness Week

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

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

People with diabetes are at increased risk for many health problems, but diabetes is especially dangerous during pregnancy because of the effects it can have on the mother and her unborn child.

Dr. Cynthia Moore is the associate director for science with CDC's Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of controlling diabetes during pregnancy. Welcome to the show, Cindy.

[Dr. Moore] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] First, let's start with the basics. What exactly is diabetes?

[Dr. Moore] Diabetes is a condition in which your body can't properly use the sugars and starches in food to make energy. As a result, the amount of sugar in the blood builds up to a high level and this can lead to health problems for a woman and her pregnancy.

[Dr. Gaynes] Tell us about the different types of diabetes and how they might affect a pregnancy?

[Dr. Moore] The different types of diabetes can be confusing. In general, when we think about diabetes and the effects during pregnancy, we divide the condition into two main types - preexisting diabetes and gestational diabetes. Preexisting diabetes is any diabetes that occurs before pregnancy. This includes type 1 diabetes which usually starts in childhood and type 2 diabetes which often occurs with being overweight or obese. If not controlled before and during pregnancy, diabetes can cause the baby to have birth defects, be stillborn, or born too early. Diabetes can also cause or worsen health problems in the mother, such as high blood pressure, kidney and heart disease, nerve damage, or vision problems. In contrast to preexisting diabetes, gestational diabetes is first found in a woman during her pregnancy. If not controlled, gestational diabetes can cause the baby to grow too large and this leads to problems with delivery for the mother and her baby. There also can be problems with the baby's blood sugar right after birth.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cindy, how common is diabetes during pregnancy?

[Dr. Moore] Approximately one in 50 pregnant women will have preexisting type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Gestational diabetes is much more common, affecting about one in 15 pregnancies.

[Dr. Gaynes] If a woman has gestational diabetes, will she likely remain diabetic after childbirth?

[Dr. Moore] Sometimes gestational diabetes does not go away after delivery or it may come back later, after pregnancy. When this happens, the diabetes is then called type 2 diabetes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cindy, if a woman is planning to have a baby, should she get checked for diabetes *before* getting pregnant?

[Dr. Moore] It's very important for a woman planning to have a baby to see her doctor before becoming pregnant. Her doctor will go over her health history and her family history and advise her about things she needs to do or be aware of, before and during her pregnancy, including checking for diabetes. If she already has diabetes, her doctor will make sure she knows how to keep it well controlled.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of birth defects can result if a mother's diabetes isn't controlled during pregnancy?

[Dr. Moore] Unfortunately, uncontrolled diabetes during early pregnancy can cause the baby to have serious birth defects of the brain, the spine, the heart, or other organs. Often, the diabetes will cause babies to have more than one birth defect.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common strategies for controlling diabetes during pregnancy?

[Dr. Moore] It's very important that a woman who has diabetes talk with her doctor. She will need to check her blood sugar often because changes in blood sugar can occur quickly and more often during pregnancy. Her doctor can help her learn how to adjust her diet, her exercise program, and medicines to meet the changing needs of her body and her unborn baby. Finally, I'd like to add that a woman with diabetes *can* have a healthy baby, but it takes planning and working with her doctor to keep her diabetes under control.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about controlling diabetes during pregnancy?

[Dr. Moore] Listeners can get more information at www.cdc.gov/pregnancy.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Cindy. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Cynthia Moore about the importance of controlling diabetes during pregnancy.

Remember, if you're pregnant, get checked for diabetes. If you have diabetes, talk to your doctor about how to control it to keep you *and* your baby healthy.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.