

For most people gestational diabetes settles after delivery. If this does not happen, it means you have type 2 diabetes. Your GP will support and advise you on how to manage your type 2 diabetes long-term.

If you have had gestational diabetes, you are much more likely to develop it again in future pregnancies and have a future risk of developing type 2 diabetes. You can reduce this risk by maintaining a healthy weight, taking part in daily physical activity, having a healthy balanced diet and taking care of your wellbeing.

If you were diagnosed with gestational diabetes, you are eligible for the Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP) after you have given birth. This programme will help empower and support you with leading a healthy lifestyle and reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Support after your pregnancy

Most people with gestational diabetes who were on oral medications or insulin will stop this medication or insulin immediately after birth. In the first few days after birth, the midwifery team will monitor you and your baby for any lowered or heightened blood glucose levels.

Your GP should carry out a postnatal check, about 6-8 weeks after you have given birth. As well as the usual post-birth advice and checks, it is important to discuss reducing your risk of developing diabetes, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and monitoring for increased risks of developing type 2 diabetes:

- Discuss your risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- You will have a blood test around 6-13 weeks after your pregnancy and then yearly. This test is usually a HbA1c blood test, where blood is taken from your vein, this test measures your average blood sugar levels over the previous three months
- Discuss the Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP) with your GP. This programme can help you reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes by offering support on healthy eating, physical activity and weight management. As a person who has gestational diabetes, you gain automatic access to this programme which is free. You can read stories and experiences from the people who have accessed our service here: <https://healthieryou.reedwellbeing.com/stories/>
- Discuss future pregnancies, if you want to have another baby. This is because gestational diabetes is likely to occur in subsequent pregnancies
- You'll remember having the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) when you were diagnosed with gestational diabetes. Ask your GP if you should have this earlier in future pregnancies. An OGTT is a test that checks how your body handles glucose after drinking a sugary drink. This test is used to diagnose gestational diabetes, and early diagnosis will help you to be better prepared and ensure a safe and healthy pregnancy, which is best for you and your baby

Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP)

The NHS created NDPP for people who are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The programme empowers and supports people to live healthier and lower their chances of developing type 2 diabetes.

The programme does not cost anything and provides you with 13 group sessions with a trained Health Coach over 9 months with a tailored remote option. The first four sessions are every two weeks, and then once a month, so you can fit them into your schedule. Sessions typically last around 90 minutes.

If you have experienced gestational diabetes, your healthcare team will offer you a referral to the programme.

You can find more information here

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/diabetes/diabetes-prevention/>

You can also self-refer

<https://healthieryou.reedwellbeing.com/gp-information/>

Reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes

If you've had gestational diabetes, you have up to a 1 in 2 chance of developing type 2 diabetes in the next 5-10 years. There are steps you can take to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes.

- **Regularly check your blood sugar levels:** after you have given birth you must keep checking your blood sugars daily. Your healthcare team will be in touch with you to book a blood test to ensure that your blood sugar levels remain healthy. If your healthcare team has not been in touch, please contact your healthcare team to book these appointments
- **Refrain from drinking alcohol and smoking:** not drinking alcohol and not smoking can significantly reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Also, providing a smoke-free household for your baby will benefit your baby's health and wellbeing
- **Follow a healthy diet:** aim for a healthy balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, whole grains, fibre and lean sources of protein. Limit your sugar, saturated fat and salt consumption as these can increase your risk of health problems and type 2 diabetes if consumed in excess
- **Maintain a healthy weight:** take steps to manage your weight such as having a healthy balanced diet and leading an active lifestyle. This will help to reduce your future risk of developing gestational diabetes again or type 2 diabetes in the future. BMI is a general measure that shows if you are a healthy weight for your height. Your BMI should be between 18.5 and 24.9, or 18.5 and 23 for South Asian, Black African or Black Caribbean adults. Use the [NHS BMI calculator to measure your BMI](#)
- **Lead an active lifestyle:** aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week which is just 30 minutes a day for 5 days (such as walking with the pushchair,

parent and child physical activity classes or online workouts). Do muscle-strengthening physical activities on two days a week (such as house chores like gardening, carrying heavy bags and yoga). Break up long periods that you spend sitting and add physical activity into everyday habits and chores (such as marching on the spot while you wait for the kettle to boil)

- **Take care of your mental health and wellbeing:** this is important as some feel anxious or tearful after giving birth. Your healthcare team should talk to you and ask about how you are feeling. If you feel very low for more than two weeks you could have post-natal depression, which needs treating quickly to help you recover. Taking care of your mental health and wellbeing can also support reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes and keeping you and your baby healthy. This includes following good sleep hygiene, practising stress management techniques, self-care and developing healthy habits
- **Breastfeed your baby:** this can lower your blood glucose levels and reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. This will also benefit your baby by building their immune system, supporting their growth and protecting them from infections
- **Plan for future pregnancies:** you should discuss your plans for a future pregnancy with your healthcare team. If you were diagnosed with gestational diabetes, you will be advised to aim for a gap of at least 12 months between giving birth and conceiving again to reduce the risk of any pregnancy-related problems
- **Seek support from your healthcare team:** after you have given birth your healthcare team will still check in with you. If you have any concerns or questions about your health and wellbeing, contact them. There are also support groups you can join for people with gestational diabetes such as the [Diabetes UK: Peer Support Groups](#)

Type 2 diabetes symptoms to look out for

Although you will have a post-natal check with your GP it is important to look out for any symptoms of type 2 diabetes and make an appointment with your GP if you experience any of the following:

- Weeing more than usual, particularly at night
- Feeling thirsty all the time or having a very dry mouth
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Losing weight without trying to
- Itching around your genitals or recurring thrush
- Cuts or wounds taking longer to heal
- Blurred vision

Trying for another baby

During future pregnancies make sure to tell your healthcare team that you have a history of gestational diabetes. You should be offered a blood glucose monitor to carry out early self-

monitoring at home and diagnostic tests such as the OGTT. If the results from your first OGTT are normal, you should be offered a follow-up test later in your pregnancy.

If you are trying to get pregnant again you should take the steps to lead a healthy lifestyle and take care of your wellbeing. This can support you to:

- Improve your chances of getting pregnant
- Reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Reduce your risk of developing gestational diabetes in pregnancy
- Reduce your risk of problems in pregnancy
- Protect your baby's health and wellbeing

Signposting

NHS

Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP)

During your 6-week and 13-week appointment with your GP, they will talk to you about the NDPP. This programme will provide you with the skills and information to support you and your family to lead a healthier lifestyle and reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/diabetes/diabetes-prevention/>

Diabetes UK

Peer support

Contact Diabetes UK and they can support you in finding a peer support group in your area or point you in the right direction for online resources and groups

https://www.diabetes.org.uk/how_we_help/local_support_groups/peer-support

Your GP and healthcare team

Your healthcare team are always there to support and guide you. They will support you before, during and after your pregnancy to ensure that both you and your baby are healthy.