

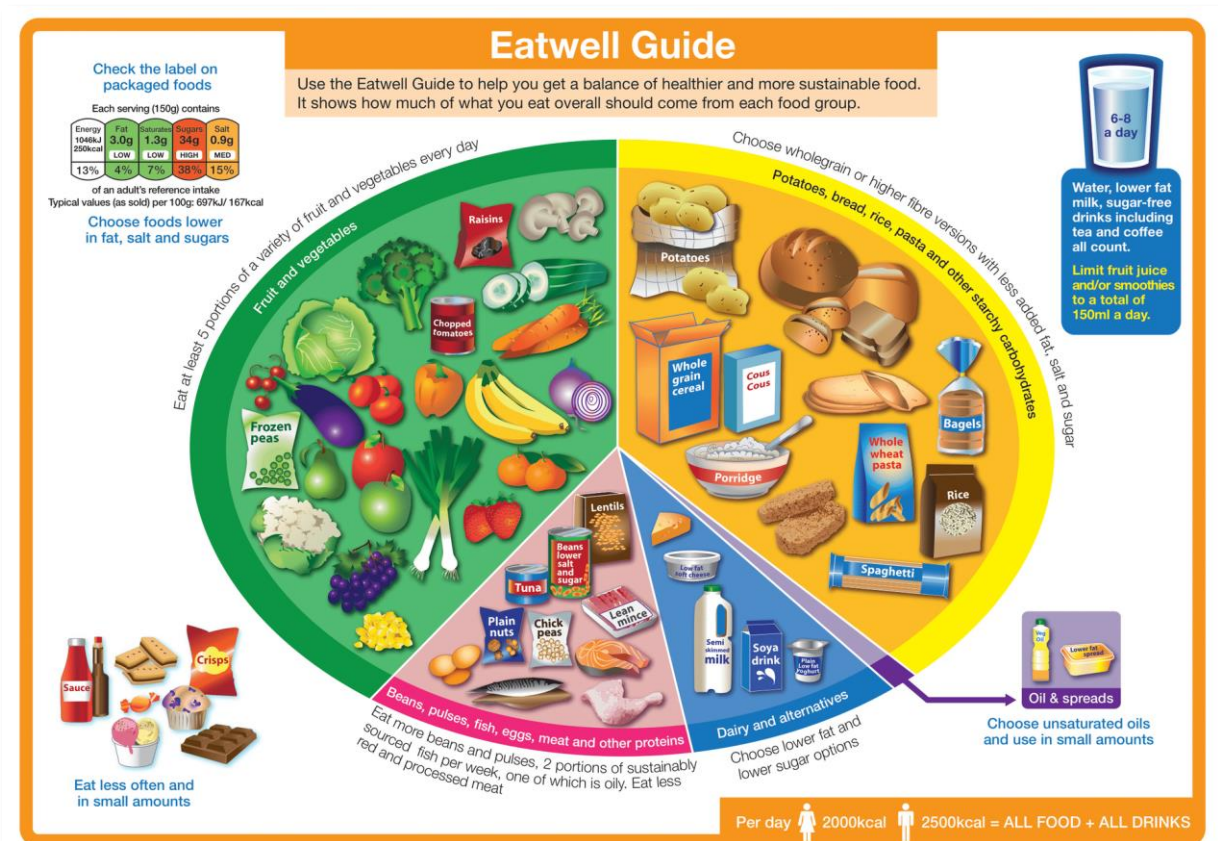
Following a healthy balanced diet is important in treating and managing gestational diabetes. It will help you keep your blood sugar levels in a healthy range and provide you and your baby with the right nutrients needed for a healthy pregnancy.

If you are diagnosed with gestational diabetes, you should be referred to a Dietitian. If this has not happened ask your healthcare team to refer you.

Dietary guidance

The overall dietary guidance for people with gestational diabetes is to eat a healthy balanced diet based on the Eatwell Guide. You should aim to eat around 2000 calories per day. You may need to increase by 200 calories during your third trimester to 2200 calories. However, you may need slightly more or less food depending on your height and current activity levels, it is best to discuss this with your healthcare team. The visual below shows the proportions of each food group that you should aim to eat throughout the day.

The Eatwell Guide



Choose healthier carbohydrates

The type and amount of carbohydrates you eat, and drink makes a difference to your blood sugar levels.

The glycaemic index (GI) shows how quickly food and drink raise blood sugar levels. This is often used by people with diabetes to control their blood sugar levels. The idea is to swap food and drinks that are high on the GI with food and drinks that are low on the GI.

Glycaemic index (GI)

Not all low-GI food and drinks are healthy choices, for example, chocolate is a low-GI food because the high-fat content slows down the absorption of sugar. It's important to also consider the quality of your food and drink choices when using the GI. In general, aim for less processed carbohydrates with higher amounts of fibre.

The amount of carbohydrates you eat has a greater effect on blood sugar levels than the GI ranking. Eating too much of any carbohydrate, even low GI ones can raise your blood sugar levels too high. For example, pasta has a low GI, but if you eat a big portion of it, your blood sugar levels will significantly increase.

Food and drink type	Healthier Low GI food and drinks (choose more often)	Less healthy High GI food and drinks (choose less often)
Breads	<p>When buying bread look out for wholegrain or wholemeal on the packaging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholegrain tortilla • Wholegrain chapatti • Pumpernickel • Granary • Rye bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White bread • Brown bread (unless wholegrain) • Baguette • Bagels • Most gluten-free bread • Naan bread • Tacos
Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweet potato 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mashed potato • Chips or fries • Jacket potato
Rice and grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholegrain rice • Basmati rice • Semolina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White rice • Short-grain rice • Sushi rice

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulghur wheat • Quinoa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasmine rice • Tapioca
Pasta and noodles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal pasta • Wholemeal noodles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gluten-free pasta • Corn pasta
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolled oats/jumbo oats • All Bran • No added sugar muesli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coco pops • Cornflakes • Cheerios
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuts • Most fruit • Dark chocolate (>70%) avoid white or milk chocolate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waffles • Cream crackers • Pretzels • Candy and sweets
Legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All beans • Lentils • Green peas • Chickpeas 	

Cut down on sugar

Cutting down on sugar is important to keep your blood sugar levels in the healthy range. Ways to cut down on sugar:

- **Swap sugary drinks:** swap sugary drinks (including fruit juice) with water, cordial, or decaffeinated tea and coffee
- **Reduce added sugar:** swap added sugar for artificial sweeteners such as stevia
- **Use the traffic light label reader:** avoid food and drinks with lots of reds instead, choose food and drinks with lots of greens on their label
- **Eat healthier snacks:** swap sweets, chocolates, sweet pastries and desserts for fruit, unsalted nuts, Ryvita with a healthy topping or chopped vegetables with a houmous dip (e.g., carrot, salad pepper, cucumber sticks)
- **Choose lower sugar varieties:** swap sugary food and drinks for low/no sugar versions such as low/no-sugar yoghurts and drinks

Eat more fibre

Eating foods that have a lot of fibre, such as wholegrain bread and cereals, can benefit your digestive health, help you control your blood sugar levels, prevent you from getting constipated (which is a common issue during pregnancy) and make you feel fuller for longer.

Soluble fibre found in fruits, vegetables, beans and oats can slow down how quickly sugar is absorbed during the digestive process.

High fibre swaps	Poor	Okay	Great
Rice (dry, per 100g):	White (1.3g)	Brown (3.5g)	Wild (6g)
Pasta (dry, per 100g):	White (3.2g)	50/50 (7.2g)	Wholewheat (9g)
Bread (per slice):	White (1g)	50/50 (1.9g)	Wholemeal (2.7g)
Noodles (dry, per 100g):	Rice (1g)	Egg (3.3g)	Wholewheat (7.7g)
Potatoes (per 100g):	Mash (1.3g)	Mash with the skin left on (2.8g)	Baked sweet potato (4.3g)
Cereals (per portion 30g):	Corn flakes (1g)	Weetabix (3.8g)	All Bran (8.3g)

Eat regular meals and don't skip meals

Having a regular breakfast, lunch and evening meal can help you manage your blood sugar levels and keep them within the healthy range. Keeping to a regular healthy diet can help you to reduce hunger pangs, reduce your desire to snack, increase energy levels, help you manage your weight and provide you with the right amount of nutrients that you and your baby need throughout the day.

Many people find benefit in eating smaller meals more often throughout the day (usually eating something small every 2-3 hours). This approach can help keep blood sugar levels steady for people with gestational diabetes.

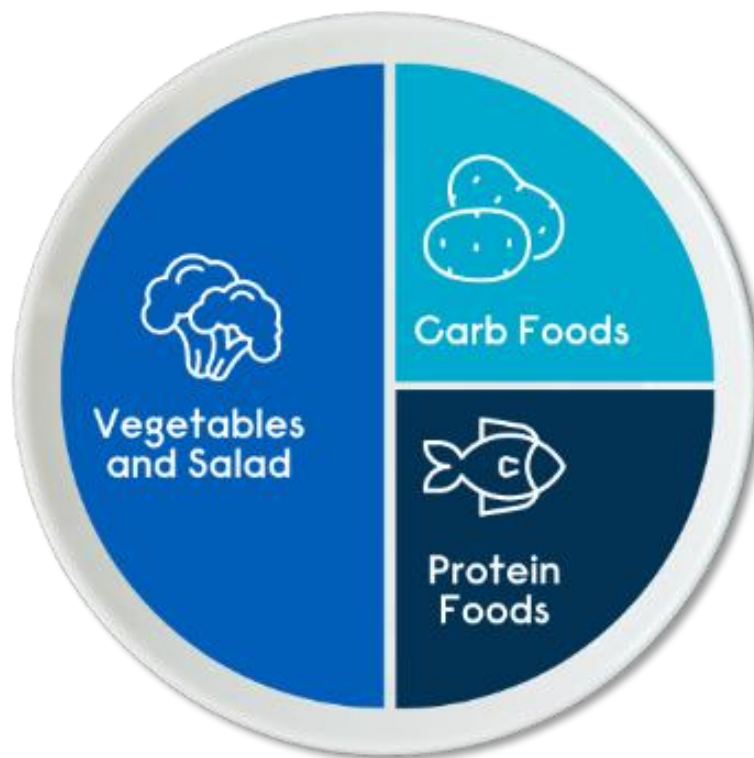
Get your portions right

- **Starchy carbohydrates:** 30-50g of starchy carbohydrates with each meal (10g of carbs is roughly 1 medium serving spoon of cooked rice and 15g of carbs is one slice of bread)
- **Fruit and vegetables:** 5 portions per day (2 fruit and 3 vegetables)
- **Protein:** include one portion of protein with each meal (1 portion is roughly the size of the palm of your hand)
- **Dairy and dairy alternatives:** 3 portions per day (1 portion is a small matchbox size of hard cheese, 200mls of milk and 125g pot of yoghurt)
- **Oils and spreads:** aim for as little as possible (one portion is roughly a teaspoon of oil, ghee and butter)
- **Water and low sugar/fat/salt drinks:** 6-8 cups per day (1 cup is 200ml)

BDA. (2021). Gestational diabetes. <https://www.bda.uk.com/static/e2c3fac8-7a56-4f89-849ac39e97f185fe/Gestational-Diabetes.pdf>

T-Plate

The 'T' plate method for plating up your meals can be an easy way to manage the amount of each food group you are eating, supporting you to eat a healthy balanced diet. 1 third of your plate should be fruit and vegetables, a quarter of your plate should be starchy carbohydrates and a quarter should be lean protein, fish or a plant source of protein.



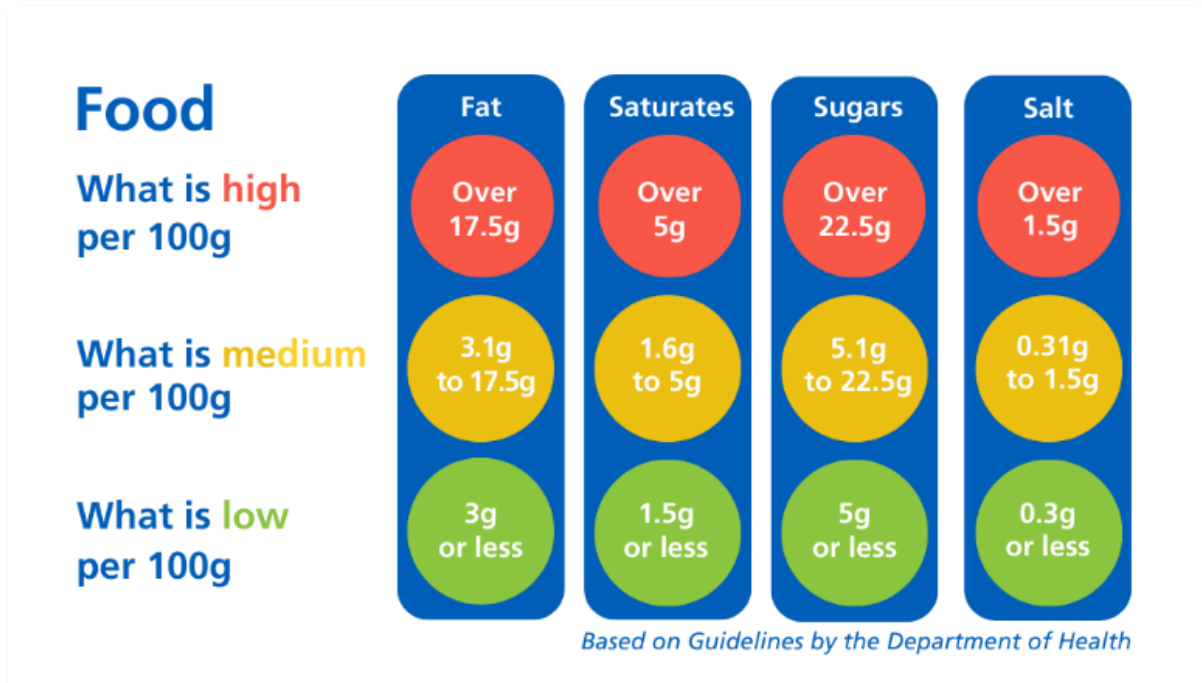
Keep a food diary and make a shopping list

A shopping list and a food diary can be useful for planning and tracking your diet:

- **Shopping list:** help you stick to a plan and buy the foods that are healthy for your blood sugar levels. It can also help you save money, reduce food waste and avoid impulse buys
- **Food diary:** helps you monitor your blood sugar levels and see how different foods and drinks affect them

Read the label

On food labels, the ingredients list is in order of high to low quantity. If sugar, syrup or anything ending in 'ose' is at the top of the list, the product is high in sugar. The traffic light label was created as a quick measure to show how much fat, saturated fat sugars and salt are present in the food and drink per 100g.



Food and drinks to avoid

Avoid the following food and drinks while you are pregnant. They can harm your baby's health and you should not consume them at all.

- Mould ripened soft cheese
- Avoid all types of pâtés
- Raw or soft-boiled eggs (unless British Lion marked)
- Raw or undercooked meats
- Shark, marlin, swordfish
- No more than two tuna steaks per week
- No more than four cans of tuna per week
- Unpasteurised milk or dairy products
- Alcohol

The food and drinks below can negatively affect your blood sugar levels and your gestational diabetes. This could harm both your and your baby's health. These foods and drinks are not

part of a healthy balanced diet, so even if you do not have gestational diabetes you will benefit from avoiding them.

- Fast food
- Fried food
- Baked goods, such as muffins, doughnuts, or cakes
- Sweetened cereals, sugary granola bars and sweetened oatmeal
- Sugary drinks, such as soda, juice, and sweetened beverages
- Candy
- Processed starchy foods, such as white pasta and white rice

Managing nausea and sickness

Nausea and sickness are common symptoms that many women experience during pregnancy, especially in the first trimester. They are often referred to as “morning sickness”, although they can happen at any time of the day.

Low blood sugar levels can trigger or worsen nausea and sickness in pregnancy. To help prevent or reduce nausea and sickness in pregnancy, and to keep your blood sugar levels stable, you can:

- Eat smaller meals more often throughout the day, rather than large or heavy meals
- Choose foods that are high in protein, fibre and complex carbohydrates, such as lean meat, eggs, nuts, seeds, beans, whole grain bread, cereals, fruits, and vegetables
- Avoid foods that are high in fat, sugar, or salt, such as fried foods, sweets, cakes, biscuits, crisps, or fizzy drinks
- Drink plenty of water and other fluids, such as milk, juice, or herbal teas, to stay hydrated and prevent dehydration (aim for 6-8 cups of 200ml of water or low fat/sugar/salt per day)
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco, as they can affect your blood sugar levels, and may also harm your baby’s health and development
- Try to get some gentle exercise every day, such as walking, swimming, yoga, or Pilates
- Rest when you need to and get enough sleep at night

Nausea and sickness in pregnancy are usually mild and tend to improve or clear up by the second trimester. However, if you have severe or persistent nausea and sickness, or if you have signs of dehydration, such as dark urine, dry mouth, or dizziness, you should contact your healthcare team as soon as possible.

NHS

NHS Healthy Start

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk. You'll receive an NHS Healthy Start prepaid card, which will be topped up every 4 weeks.

You can use your card to buy:

- Plain liquid cow's milk
- Fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables
- Fresh, dried, and tinned pulses
- Infant formula milk based on cow's milk

You can also use your card to collect:

- Healthy Start vitamins: these support you during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Vitamin drops for babies and young children: these are suitable from birth to 4 years old

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Healthy eating in pregnancy

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/pregnancy/healthy-eating-in-pregnancy/>

Foods to avoid

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/foods-to-avoid/>

Diabetes UK

Recipe ideas

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/recipes>

What to eat

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/enjoy-food/eating-with-diabetes/gestational-diabetes>

British Dietetic Association (BDA)

Dietary advice for gestational diabetes

<https://www.bda.uk.com/static/e2c3fac8-7a56-4f89-849ac39e97f185fe/Gestational-Diabetes.pdf>

Tommy's

Nutrition advice

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/pregnancy-complications/gestational-diabetes/gestational-diabetes-and-your-diet>