

## Mayo Clinic - Complications of gestational diabetes

*Most women who have gestational diabetes deliver healthy babies. However, gestational diabetes that's not carefully managed can lead to uncontrolled blood sugar levels and cause problems for you and your baby, including an increased likelihood of needing delivery by C-section.*

Complications that may affect your baby

If you have gestational diabetes, your baby may be at increased risk of:

**Excessive birth weight.** Extra glucose in your bloodstream crosses the placenta, which triggers your baby's pancreas to make extra insulin. This can cause your baby to grow too large (macrosomia). Very large babies are more likely to become wedged in the birth canal, sustain birth injuries or require a C-section birth.

**Early (preterm) birth and respiratory distress syndrome.** A mother's high blood sugar may increase her risk of going into labor early and delivering her baby before its due date. Or her doctor may recommend early delivery because the baby is growing so large. Babies born early may experience respiratory distress syndrome – a condition that makes breathing difficult. Babies with this syndrome may need help breathing until their lungs mature and become stronger. Babies of mothers with gestational diabetes may experience respiratory distress syndrome even if they're not born early.

**Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).** Sometimes babies of mothers with gestational diabetes develop low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) shortly after birth because their own insulin production is high. Severe episodes of hypoglycemia may provoke seizures in the baby. Prompt feedings and sometimes an intravenous glucose solution can return the baby's blood sugar level to normal.

**Jaundice.** This yellowish discoloration of the skin and the whites of the eyes may occur if a baby's liver isn't mature enough to break down a substance called bilirubin, which normally forms when the body recycles old or damaged red blood cells. Although jaundice usually isn't a cause for concern, careful monitoring is important.

**Type 2 diabetes later in life.** Babies of mothers who have gestational diabetes have a higher risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life.

Untreated gestational diabetes can result in a baby's death either before or shortly after birth.

Complications that may affect you Gestational diabetes may also increase the mother's risk of:

**High blood pressure, preeclampsia and eclampsia.** Gestational diabetes increases your risk of developing high blood pressure during your pregnancy. It also raises your risk of preeclampsia and eclampsia – two serious complications of pregnancy that cause high blood pressure and other symptoms that can threaten the lives of both mother and baby.

**Future diabetes.** If you have gestational diabetes, it's more likely to happen again during a future pregnancy. You're also more likely to develop type 2 diabetes as you get older. However, making healthy lifestyle choices such as eating healthy foods and exercising can help reduce the risk of future type 2 diabetes. Of those women with a history of gestational diabetes who reach their ideal body weight after delivery, fewer than one in four develop type 2 diabetes.