Screening for Diabetes After Pregnancy

If you had gestational diabetes during your pregnancy, it will be important to have another test after you have had your baby (this is done between 6 weeks and 6 months after the delivery). This test will help to see if you are at risk for or now have Type 2 diabetes. This is a very important test for you and your family.

Remember, eat healthy meals and snacks, watch your weight, and increase your activity to help prevent diabetes. These are healthy habits that will benefit you and your family.

Committed to Diabetes Care in Nova Scotia

The Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia (DCPNS) was established in 1991. Funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, our mission is: “Through leadership, to improve the health of Nova Scotians affected by or at risk of developing diabetes.”

This pamphlet was produced by the Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia Pregnancy and Diabetes Working Group.

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AFTER PREGNANCY: HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR ORAL GLUCOSE TOLERANCE TEST (OGTT)

- Women with gestational diabetes should be screened 6 weeks to 6 months after they deliver to ensure that their blood glucose values have returned to normal (non-diabetes values).
- DO NOT eat, drink, smoke, or exercise strenuously for 8 hours prior to your test. You may drink small sips of water.
- You will be asked to drink the sugary drink within 5 minutes. The test may take up to 3 hours. Since activity can interfere with test results, you will be asked to sit quietly during the entire test. DO NOT eat during the test, and DO NOT leave the lab area during the test. Bring a snack to eat after the test is completed.
- A blood sample will be collected when you arrive. This is your fasting blood glucose value.
- After your fasting blood glucose has been taken, you will be given a sweet liquid to drink that contains a 75-gram amount of glucose. Your blood will be taken 2 hours later. There is no 1-hour test at this time.
- Blood collection staff will NOT give you the results of the test. Your health care provider will discuss the results with you.

NOTE: The OGTT can still be given while breastfeeding. Depending on the results, some women may need to repeat the test when breastfeeding has stopped.
Screening for Diabetes in Pregnancy

All pregnant women should be screened for gestational diabetes between 24 and 28 weeks gestation. This may require 2 different tests on 2 different days. If you have risk factors for gestational diabetes, you may be screened earlier in your pregnancy and more than once (early and then again between 24 and 28 weeks if your first blood test results were normal). Risk factors for gestational diabetes include, among others:

- Family history of diabetes
- Gestational diabetes in a past pregnancy
- Being overweight
- Being older
- Having a big baby in a past pregnancy

The blood tests help to see how your body handles glucose and the role pregnancy hormones may have throughout your pregnancy.

Gestational diabetes can have serious risks. Finding gestational diabetes early and managing it will help to improve pregnancy outcomes for you and your baby. Proper management during pregnancy will also reduce your risk of developing diabetes later in life.

There are NO risks to you or your baby when taking these blood tests.

Preparing for Your Screening Tests for Gestational Diabetes (During Pregnancy)

The first test is a screen for gestational diabetes and is called the glucose challenge test (it contains 50-grams of glucose in a sugary drink), and it can be given at any time of day. You should NOT fast for this test, but continue your regular eating and activity routine. If this test result is greater than or equal to 11.1 mmol/L, you have gestational diabetes and more testing is not needed.

If this test is positive but less than 11.1 mmol/L (higher than normal), the second test, called an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT), is given fasting (after 8 to 10 hours of no food and only water) on another day. The OGTT (a sugary drink containing 75-grams of glucose) is used to confirm if you have gestational diabetes or not.

In the days leading up to your 75-gram OGTT:

- Eat your normal diet. Do not limit what you eat or drink, as this may affect your test results.
- If you are ill with a cold, flu, or other illness, postpone your test for a few days (but not too long) until you are feeling better.

DURING PREGNANCY: ON THE DAY OF THE 75-GRAM ORAL GLUCOSE TOLERANCE TEST (OGTT)

1. DO NOT eat, drink, smoke, or exercise for 8 hours prior to your test. You may drink small sips of water.
2. You will be asked to drink the sugary drink within 5 minutes. The test may take up to 3 hours. You will be asked to sit quietly during the entire test. DO NOT eat during the test, and do not leave the lab area during the test. Bring a snack to eat after the test.
3. A blood sample will be collected just before the drink is given. This is your fasting blood glucose value.*
4. Blood samples will be taken 1 AND 2 hours after you have taken the sugary drink.
5. Blood collection staff will NOT give you the results of the test. Your health care provider will discuss the results with you.

*NOTE: In some cases, the fasting blood test will be reviewed before the sugary drink is given. Depending on the result, some women may not need to take this drink.