

A healthy meal plan is important for managing your blood glucose.

Gestational Diabetes Meal Planning

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is diabetes that is diagnosed during pregnancy among women who do not clearly have diabetes when they are not pregnant. GDM can be treated by following a meal plan that focuses on regular, balanced meals and healthy snacks. Some women with GDM may need medication along with nutrition therapy to control their blood sugar (glucose). Blood glucose control will help to reduce risks for both the mother and baby.

A healthy meal plan during pregnancy is one that includes eating a variety of nutritious foods in moderate amounts and at regular meal times. This meal plan is high in healthy nutrients. Healthy food choices should include vegetables, fruits, lean protein, low-fat dairy, legumes and whole grains.

If you have gestational diabetes, it is important to eat healthy carbohydrates to help you control your blood glucose level. Uncontrolled high blood glucose levels can lead to problems for the mother and baby. Your doctor can tell you more about the risks.

To get started, this brochure will explain what you need to know about:

- Creating a healthy meal plan
- Foods you should limit
- Food portion control
- Reading food labels

You should meet with a registered dietitian to make a meal plan that is right for you. The dietitian can guide and teach you about how you can control your blood glucose level and manage your weight with your eating plan.

Creating a Healthy Meal Plan for Gestational Diabetes Mellitus

Here are some basic guidelines that will help you control your blood glucose.

Eat 3 meals per day.

- Plan to eat your meals at about the same time each day.
- Do not skip meals.
- Make sure you eat a variety of foods (fruits, vegetables, protein, whole grains, dairy).
- If your meals are more than 5 hours apart, have a small snack.

Enjoy healthy carbohydrates.

While all foods can affect your blood glucose, carbohydrates may have the biggest impact. A meal plan with consistent amounts of carbohydrates can help improve your blood glucose. This means that you eat the same amount of carbohydrates at each meal. Examples of healthy carbohydrates are:

- Starches (whole grain bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta)
- Beans (lentils, chickpeas)
- Starchy vegetables (winter squash, potatoes, corn, peas)
- Fruit (apples, grapes, oranges)
- Low-fat dairy products (milk, plain yogurt)

Count your carbohydrates daily.

- You may want to use a website such as www.myfitnesspal.com to do this.

Monitor meal plan success.

- Monitor blood glucose as recommended by your health care provider.
- Your health care provider may ask you to test your urine for ketones 1 to 2 times per day. If so, they will show you how to do this.

Follow your health care providers' guidelines.

- Gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy.
- Follow your prescribed meal plan.
- Participate in regular physical activity as advised by your health care provider.
- Take medicines as directed.

Foods to Limit

Limit foods that are high in unhealthy fats.

Avoid foods that are high in sugar such as:

- Flavored yogurt, ice cream
- Juice
- Dried fruit, syrup-packed canned fruit
- Fruit spread (jams, jellies)
- Bakery goods (cookies, cake, pastry)
- Candy
- Crackers, sugar-sweetened cereals
- Sweetened drinks (soft drinks, sweetened drink mixes, Kool-Aid®)
- Sweeteners (sugar, honey, molasses, syrup)

Food Portion Control

Watch Portion Sizes:

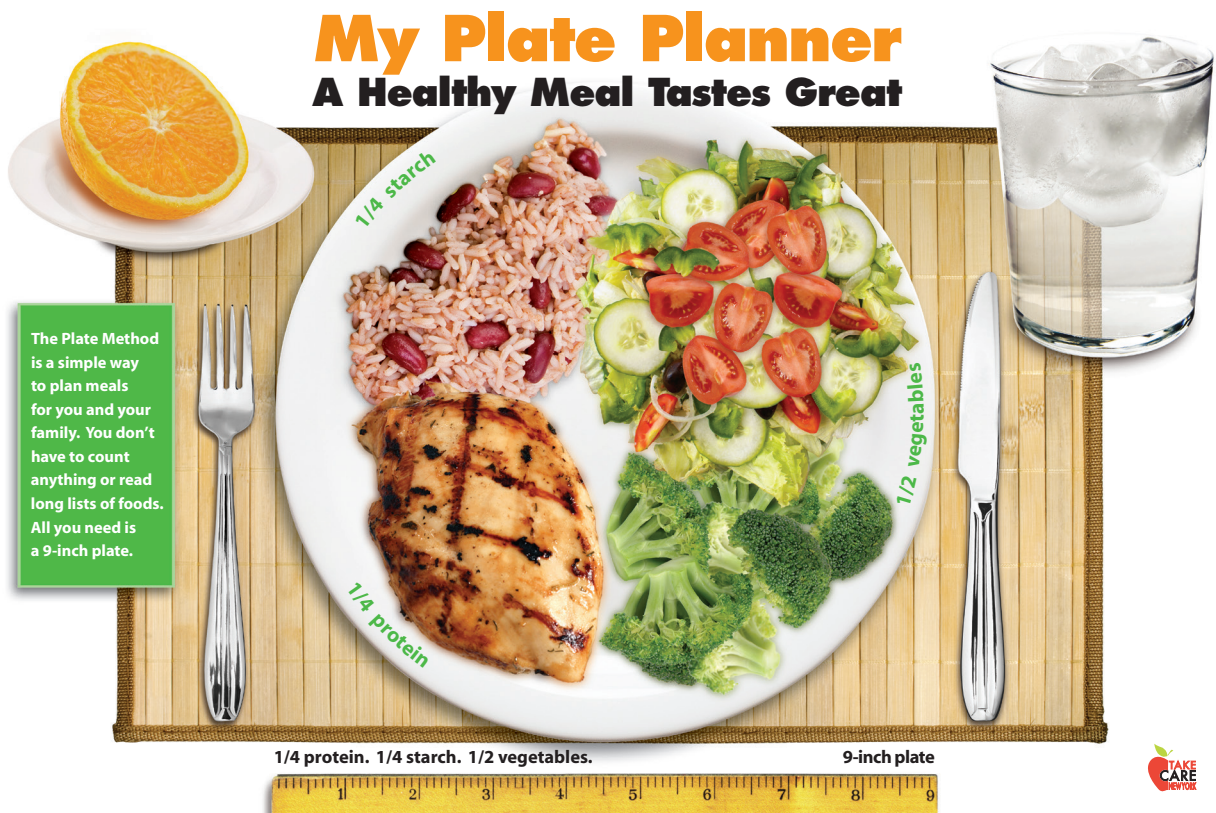
- Even healthy foods, such as large portions of fruit, will cause high blood glucose if you eat too much.
- Make sure each of your meals has the same amount of carbohydrates.
- Follow the *My Plate Planner* (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>).

My Plate Planner

Create a healthy plate that will help to keep your blood glucose in an acceptable range by following the Plate Method's four easy steps (see Figure 1):

1. Draw a line down the middle of your plate and fill an entire $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with non-starchy vegetables. (see Appendix Food Charts).
2. Draw another line across the middle of the other $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate and fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with a grain or starchy vegetable (see Appendix Food Charts). Fill the final $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with a lean protein (see Appendix Food Charts).
3. A small piece of fruit or a serving of dairy (see Food Charts) is optional.
4. Finish your meal off with a glass of water or other zero calorie drink option.

Figure 1: My Plate Planner



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Reading Food Labels

Food labels contain important information to help you manage your meal plan (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Food Nutrition Label

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size ½ cup (80 grams)			
Servings Per Container 4			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 110		Calories from Fat 0	
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat 0g			0%
Saturated Fat	0g		0%
Trans Fat	0g		0%
Cholesterol	0g		0%
Sodium	115mg		5%
Total Carbohydrate 20g			7%
Dietary Fiber	4g		16%
Sugars	0g		0%
Protein	7g		
Vitamin A	0%	Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	4%	Iron	10%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat	9	Carbohydrate	4
		Protein	4

1. Find the Serving Size.

2. Find Total Carbohydrate (per serving).

- A dietitian can teach you more about the amount of carbohydrate that fits your specific needs.

Since carbohydrates have a big impact on your blood glucose, it is important to keep track of how many carbohydrates you eat. Carbohydrates are measured in grams (g). One serving of carbohydrate contains 15 grams. Your care team will talk to you about how many grams of carbohydrates per day are right for you.

A Healthy Menu Example:

These menu examples show options for a meal plan that contains 180g of carbohydrate (CHO) per day. They show 3 to 4 servings of CHO at each meal and snack options.

Option 1

Breakfast
<p><i>45g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 egg • 1 whole grain English muffin (30g) • 1 slice cheese or ¼ slice avocado • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15g)
Snack
<p><i>15g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Wasa crackers (15g) • 1 ounce cheese
Lunch
<p><i>45g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 slices whole grain bread (30g) • 3 ounces sliced turkey • 1 Tbsp mustard • 1 cup carrot sticks • 1 small apple (15g)
Snack
<p><i>15g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 ounces cottage cheese • Small kiwi (15g)
Dinner
<p><i>45g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 cup quinoa (30g) • 3 to 4 ounces baked chicken or fish • 1 cup spinach greens • 1 Tbsp dressing • 1¼ cup strawberries (15g)
Snack
<p><i>15g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/3 cup hummus (15g) • 1 cup cucumbers

Option 2

Breakfast
<p><i>30g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of sprouted whole grain bread (15g) • 1 Tbsp peanut butter • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15g)
Lunch
<p><i>60g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 ounces skim milk (15g) • 2 slices whole grain bread (30g) • 3 ounces sliced turkey • 1 Tbsp mustard • 1 cup carrot sticks • 1 small apple (15g)
Dinner
<p><i>60g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ small sweet potato (30g) • 1 cup of mixed greens • ½ cup chickpeas (15g) • ½ cup cooked broccoli • 8 ounces skim milk (15g)
Snack
<p><i>30g of CHO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15g) • 1 cup raspberries (15g)

These are general guidelines. To tailor your meal plan to your specific needs, arrange to meet with an outpatient registered dietitian by calling the Northwestern Center for Lifestyle Medicine at 312.695.2300, the Center for Integrative Medicine at 312.926.DOCS (3627), or NM Primary and Specialty Care at 312.926.6000. They can assist you with making an appointment for a personalized consultation.

For more information about diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 1.800.DIABETES (1.800.342.2383.7) or visit www.diabetes.org.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Clinical Nutrition, Center for Integrative Medicine with Medicine Nursing

Carbohydrate Foods

Foods that increase your blood glucose include:

Starch (1 serving = 15g of CHO)	Other Starches and Sweets (1 serving = 15g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • 6-inch tortilla • ½ English muffin, hamburger or hotdog bun • 1 small pita • ¼ bagel (1 ounce) • 1 waffle or pancake (4-inch round, ¼ inch thick) • ¾ cup unsweetened, dry cereal • ½ cup sweetened or bran cereal • ½ cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, grits, kashi, bulgar) • ⅓ cup cooked pasta, rice, couscous, quinoa • 4 to 6 crackers (2-inch) • ¾ ounce (15 to 20) pretzels, snack chips • 3 cups light popcorn • 3 Tbsp flour (dry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup casserole or lasagna, macaroni and cheese, pasta with meat sauce • 1 cup broth-based soup • ½ cup cream-based soup or chili • 1 Tbsp sugar, syrup, jam, jelly or honey • 2 Tbsp light syrup • 2-inch square cake or brownie, unfrosted • 1 to 2 small cookies • 3 squares graham cracker • ½ cup ice cream, gelatin or frozen yogurt • ¼ cup pudding, sherbet or sorbet • ½ cup sugar-free pudding
Fruit (1 serving = 15g of CHO)	Milk (1 serving = 15g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 small fresh fruit (tennis ball size) • ½ large fruit • ½ cup unsweetened applesauce • ½ cup canned fruit in own juice or water • ½ banana (4-inch length) • ¾ cup blueberries or blackberries • 1¼ cup strawberries • ⅓ cantaloupe or honeydew (1 cup cut) • 1 wedge watermelon (1 inch thick) • 17 medium grapes • ½ small papaya • ½ grapefruit (large) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup fat-free, skim or reduced-fat milk • 1 cup unsweetened soy milk • 1 cup buttermilk • 1 cup Lactaid™ milk • 1 cup kefir • 6 ounces plain yogurt

All food products are not created equal. Be sure to read the food labels of the foods you choose to get the correct serving size and nutritional information for that product.

Other Food Groups

Foods that have *little effect* on blood glucose:

Nonstarchy Vegetables (1 serving)	Protein (1 serving)	Fats (1 serving)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup cooked vegetables • 1 cup raw vegetables • ½ cup tomato or vegetable juice <p>Any vegetables <i>except</i> corn, peas, potatoes</p> <p>Non-starchy vegetables include: onions, asparagus, green beans, broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, jicama, kale, carrots, cucumber, lettuce, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, celery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce lean meat, fish, poultry or shellfish • ¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese/1 ounce low-fat cheese • 1 egg or ¼ cup egg substitute • ¼ cup nuts • 1 Tbsp peanut butter • ½ cup tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp margarine, butter or oil • 1 Tbsp reduced-fat margarine, butter, mayo or cream cheese • 2 Tbsp reduced-fat sour cream, salad dressing or half and half • ¼ cup avocado • 1 Tbsp nuts (6 to 7 nuts) • 10 olives • 1 Tbsp sesame or sunflower seeds

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