

Gestational diabetes and physical activity



If you have gestational diabetes and your health status allows, physical activity can be very beneficial. This fact sheet gives you tips on how to get moving during your pregnancy.

How can physical activity help me?

The majority of women with gestational diabetes can be physically active. This helps to:

- better control diabetes
- bring blood sugar levels (glycemia) back to normal by avoiding high blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia)
- delay starting insulin or reduce the dose needed
- avoid weight gain

Moving more can also:

- help you feel better during pregnancy (better sleep, less stress, less back pain, etc.)
- increase your energy
- help you recover more quickly after the birth and reduce the risk of complications

It is strongly recommended that you get two and a half hours of physical activity per week.



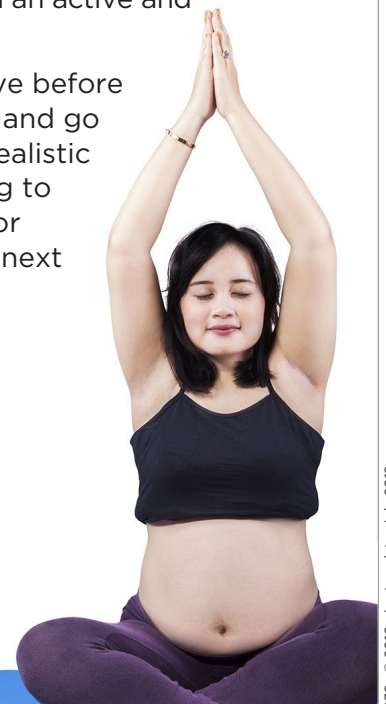
Physical activity **does not increase** the risk of miscarriage in any way!

There are certain cases, however, when it is better not to do physical activity during pregnancy (heavy bleeding, placenta too low, for example). Ask your doctor for more information.

How can I be more active during my pregnancy?

Being active by doing things you enjoy is easier than you think. It can fit right in with your day-to-day activities. Here are some ideas and tips to help you adopt or maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

- If you weren't very active before pregnancy, start slowly and go at your own pace. Set realistic goals (such as, I'm going to walk 20 minutes a day or every other day for the next 3 weeks)



- Choose an activity or activities that you enjoy and know well. Avoid activities that are too rough or involve physical contact (team sports), where you risk falling. For example, choose walking, cycling, yoga, dancing, aquafitness, or hiking.
- Be sure to maintain a moderate intensity during the activity. This means you're breathing faster, but not too fast: you should be able to talk all the time during the effort.



ATTENTION

Listen to your body, respect your physical condition and your energy level. Drink regularly and avoid overheating.

- Aim for 2.5 hours of activity per week. This can be divided into small periods of at least 10 minutes a day (such as going for a walk after lunch, climbing stairs, etc.). Preferably, do one activity at least every 2 days.

You can start by doing 3 to 5 exercise sessions of about 10 to 15 minutes each week. Soon, you may be able to move up to sessions of 30 to 45 minutes, which will give you 2.5 hours a week!



What if I'm taking insulin?

Physical exercise is still very beneficial. Just take certain precautions, because exercising while taking insulin injections can lower blood sugar levels too much (hypoglycemia).



Should I change the place where I inject?

If you need to inject insulin before exercising, do it into your abdomen. Avoid the muscles that will be working the hardest during your exercise. For example, if you're jogging, don't inject it into your thigh, otherwise the insulin may be absorbed too quickly.

Doing or not doing physical activity depends on my blood sugar level

Measure your blood sugar level before starting any physical activity that takes longer than 30 minutes, especially if you haven't eaten for 2 hours or more. Then follow these guidelines depending on your blood sugar level.

3.6 MMOL/L OR LESS

It's safer to delay physical activity and wait until your blood sugar level is stable above 3.7 mmol/l.

3.7 TO 4.9 MMOL/L

Have a 15-gram carbohydrate snack and then you can exercise.

5.0 TO 9.9 MMOL/L

Your blood sugar level is within the acceptable range. You can exercise.

10 MMOL/L OR MORE

Start with 10 minutes of exercise and measure your blood sugar level again. If it's within the acceptable range (5.0 to 9.9 mmol/l), continue exercising. If not, stop.



It's important to take a 15-gram carbohydrate snack along with you during physical activity, such as:

- 1 fruit
- 1 « fruit to go »
- 1/2 cup unsweetened fruit juice
- 4 dry social tea biscuits

What should I do if my blood sugar drops too low?

If you have signs of hypoglycemia (see the fact sheet [Insulin for gestational diabetes](#)) during physical activity, stop and measure your blood sugar.

If your blood sugar level drops too much (3.6 mmol/l or less) during or after exercise, you could try reducing the dose of fast-acting insulin in the meal before physical activity by a few units.

What should I do once I've finished my exercise?

If you're taking insulin, measure your blood sugar level to make sure you're not at risk of hypoglycemia.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Don't hesitate to contact a member of your health care team. They will give you all the advice you need.





NOTEPAD



Questions



Resource people and contacts



USEFUL RESOURCES

Connaître son diabète pour mieux vivre,
Unité de jour métabolique de l'Hôtel-Dieu
du CHUM, Éditions Rogers Medias, 2013
[French only].

Fact sheet [Gestational diabetes](#).

CHUM brochure *Ressources en activités
physiques pendant et après la grossesse*
[French only].

Physical activity:

> education.gouv.qc.ca

Click on English in the top right corner.

Type "active for two" into the search bar →
Active for Two: Physical Activity During and
After Pregnancy.

> pregnancyinfo.ca

Tabs: Your pregnancy → Healthy pregnancy
→ Exercise during pregnancy.

Diabetes Québec:

> 1 800 361-3504

> diabete.qc.ca

Click on English in the top right corner.

Diabetes Canada:

> 1 800 226-8464

> diabetes.ca

To learn more about pregnancy, delivery,
or follow-up care, visit our internet site.



Videos, other fact sheets, and
more resources are available at:

centredesnaissanceschum.com

*The content of this document in no way replaces
the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the
treatment suggested by your health professional.*

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