

# Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) Meal Plan

## Why do I need a GDM meal plan?

If you have **gestational** [je-STEY-shuhn-uhl] **diabetes mellitus (GDM)**, you and your developing baby are likely to have high blood glucose (too much glucose — or “sugar” — in the blood). This can cause problems for both of you during the pregnancy, during delivery, and in the years to come.

Following a meal plan is one of the most important ways to help control your blood glucose and lower health risks. Your healthcare provider will help you decide on a meal plan that works for you. This handout provides a blank plan for you to fill out and use.

## Meal plan basics

Meal plans for GDM tackle a few basic ideas:

- **Carbohydrates matter.** All foods contain some combination of carbohydrate, fat, and protein. Fat and protein affect your blood glucose over many hours, but carbohydrate affects it much faster. For this reason, you’ll need to watch how many carbohydrate (“carbs”) you eat each day. Your healthcare provider will show you how, and your meal plan will help you stay on track.
- **Nutrition matters.** More than ever before, you need to make healthy food choices. Nutritious foods support your baby’s growth and development, help control your GDM, and keep you feeling good. Your meal plan supports healthy choices.
- **Timing and portions matter.** Controlling your GDM requires controlling the pattern of your eating. Your meal plan gives you targets for when to eat and how much to eat.



Use the **Food Finder** meal planner to help you control your GDM, nourish your growing baby, and keep you feeling good.



## Common questions about GDM meal plans

### *Which foods are considered carbohydrates?*

For your meal plan, only a few types of foods are counted as carbs — starches, fruits, dairy, and non-starchy vegetables. The Food Finder chart on page 3 gives examples and portion sizes for these types of foods.

### *Should I aim for a very low carb diet — like the Atkins diet?*

No. You (and your baby) need carbohydrates to stay healthy. Follow your meal plan to know when and how much carbohydrate to include in your meals and snacks.

### *Do I need to count calories?*

It depends. Some women with GDM need to count calories, but many others don’t. Your meal plan will list all of the targets you need to aim for — and your healthcare provider can answer any questions.

### *How do I know if my eating plan is working to control my GDM?*

A healthcare provider will show you how to test your blood glucose several times a day. Your testing results will show how well your GDM is controlled and whether your treatment should be adjusted. You’ll also be checked during your regular prenatal visits.

## Six steps

Your meal plan will give you goals for the whole day and for each meal and snack. But you may not always have your plan with you to help you remember. By following these 6 simple steps, you can help control your blood glucose levels:

- 1 Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.** Eat small amounts of food about every 2 to 3 hours. Spreading your carbohydrates evenly throughout the day helps keep your blood glucose stable.
- 2 In every meal and snack, include some healthy protein.** Protein helps you feel satisfied and full of energy throughout the day and helps even out your blood glucose.
- 3 Eat a very small breakfast, with a similar mid-morning snack about 2 hours later.** When you have GDM, your blood glucose tends to be high in the morning. To offset this, your meal plan will probably have fewer carbs at breakfast than at lunch or dinner. For example, your plan may specify a breakfast that includes one milk serving, one starch serving, and some protein.
- 4 Choose high-fiber foods.** Good sources include whole-grain breads and cereals, fresh and frozen vegetables, and beans. Fruits are also a good source of fiber. Most plans include fruit in afternoon or evening meals and snacks.
- 5 Watch out for sugar and concentrated sweets.** Sweets raise your blood glucose quickly and significantly without giving your body the nutrition it needs. Here are some tips:
  - Don't drink fruit juice. Eat your fruit servings later in the day (not at breakfast). Although fruits are a healthy source of carbohydrate, their carbs are easily absorbed and tend to raise blood glucose levels quickly.
  - Avoid regular soda, fruit juice and fruit drinks, nectar, regular Kool-Aid, Hi-C. Drinks like these have a lot of carbs and can raise your blood glucose quickly.
  - Limit desserts such as ice cream, pies, cakes, cookies, and other sweets. These foods often have large amounts of sugar, honey, or other sweeteners such as sucrose, fructose, corn syrup, dextrose, molasses, or fruit juices.
  - Read labels carefully and check them for total carbohydrates per serving.

**6 Be careful about fat,** especially if you're gaining weight. Follow these suggestions:

- Choose lean meats with lots of protein. Chicken, turkey, lean beef, ham, and fish are good choices. Skip lunchmeats, bacon, sausage, and hot dogs.
- Cut off all visible fat by removing the skin of chicken and turkey and trimming fat off meat.
- Bake, broil, steam, boil, or grill foods.
- Avoid frying. If you do fry foods, use nonstick pans, vegetable oil spray, or small amounts (1 to 2 teaspoons) of oil.
- Use skim or low-fat (1%) milk and dairy products.
- Limit or avoid adding extra fat, such as butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise, avocados, cream, cream cheese, salad dressing, or nuts.
- Stay away from convenience foods. These are often higher in carbohydrate, fat, and sodium.
- Avoid instant noodles, canned soup, instant potatoes, frozen meals, and packaged foods.

### *Tips for staying healthy*

- **Follow the rest of your GDM treatment plan.** Your meal plan may be just one part of your treatment. Follow your healthcare team's advice for any daily testing, exercise, or medicine.
- **Keep taking your daily prenatal vitamin** as directed by your doctor or midwife.
- **Don't drink alcohol.** No amount of alcohol is considered safe for a growing baby.
- **Stay in touch.** Contact your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns about your meal plan or your pregnancy. Keep your appointments for monthly prenatal visits with your provider.
- **Enjoy your pregnancy.** Remember that most babies born to women with GDM are healthy. Follow your treatment plan, try not to worry, and look forward to meeting your baby.

# My gestational diabetes MEAL PLAN

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_







Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Remember: 15 grams of carbohydrate = 1 serving of carbohydrate

## MY DAILY TARGETS:

- **Carbohydrate:** \_\_\_\_\_ grams per day (\_\_\_\_\_ servings)
- **Protein:** \_\_\_\_\_ grams per day (\_\_\_\_\_ ounces, or \_\_\_\_\_ servings)
- **Fat:** \_\_\_\_\_ grams per day (\_\_\_\_\_ servings)
- **Calories:** \_\_\_\_\_

When	What and How Much	Menu Ideas
<p><b>BREAKFAST</b> at about _____ AM</p> <p><i>Test your blood glucose before breakfast. Also test at these times:</i></p> <p>_____</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	
<p><b>MIDMORNING SNACK</b> at about _____ AM</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	
<p><b>LUNCH</b> at about _____ AM/PM</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	
<p><b>MIDAFTERNOON SNACK</b> at about _____ PM</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	
<p><b>DINNER</b> at about _____ PM</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	
<p><b>EVENING SNACK</b> at about _____ PM</p> 	<p><b>Carbohydrate:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings) Starch _____ Milk _____ Fruit _____ Non-starchy vegetable _____</p> <p><b>Protein:</b> _____ grams (_____ ounces, or _____ servings)</p> <p><b>Fat:</b> _____ grams (_____ servings)</p>	

