

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Gestational Diabetes

According to the American Diabetes Association, gestational diabetes occurs when pregnant mothers, who have never had diabetes before, have high blood sugar levels during pregnancy. This can occur around the 24th week of pregnancy. Diabetes specialists do not know exactly what causes this type of diabetes, but they do have some reasons as to why this occurs in pregnant mothers.

When the mother is pregnant, the placenta supports the baby's growth and development. The placenta is the central hub for all of the necessary hormones the baby needs for development. This normally produces high amounts of hormones. Some of these hormones produced can be insulin resistant. Insulin resistance is the condition in which placenta produced hormones can block the normal action of the mother's insulin in her body. When this occurs, the body can't use the insulin properly and there's not enough insulin being produced. Without this vital insulin, sugars can't leave the blood to be changed to energy. This allows for sugars to build up in the blood, causing high blood sugar.

If the mother does not take proper action of treatment during pregnancy while diagnosed with gestational diabetes, it can have negative effects on her baby. Since the mother has high blood sugar, this can cross the placenta along with other nutrients, and give her baby high blood sugar. This causes the baby's pancreas to start making extra insulin to try to lower and get rid of the blood sugar. The baby is now getting more energy than it essentially needs for growth and development. This extra storage of energy is stored as fat. This can then lead to the mother giving birth to a baby with macrosomia, or "fat" baby. These types of babies are a lot bigger in size than a normal

newborn baby should be. The baby can then face several health problems once born such as damaging their shoulders during birth, developing breathing problems, and having low blood glucose levels.

According to the American Diabetes Association, treatment for gestational diabetes should be started quickly. Since mothers are aiming for keeping their blood sugars at a normal range between 70-150 mg/dl, special meal plans and physical activity are the recommended treatment options. Mothers can also test their blood sugar daily and receive insulin injections. As long as the mother maintains a healthy lifestyle of diet and exercise, gestational diabetes can be manageable.

After pregnancy, gestational diabetes normally goes away. However, once a mother has had gestational diabetes, her chances of the disease returning during a second pregnancy are high. There is also correlation with many mothers in later years developing type 2 diabetes. Diabetes specialists have found a link between the two conditions, which both involve insulin resistance. If the mother is diagnosed with gestational diabetes, certain lifestyle changes can take place to prevent type 2 diabetes after pregnancy.

Resources:

<http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/gestational/how-to-treat-gestational.html>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gestational-diabetes/basics/symptoms/con-20014854>

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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