What is gestational diabetes?
During pregnancy, some mothers develop diabetes (high blood sugar). This type of diabetes is called **gestational diabetes**.

What causes gestational diabetes?
Pregnancy causes many changes in the body. In some women, these changes make it hard for the body to produce enough **insulin** to use all the sugar ingested.

Insulin helps control blood sugar. Without enough insulin, blood sugar levels go up (**hyperglycemia**). When the levels get too high, the woman has diabetes.

How can gestational diabetes affect my baby?
Babies born to mothers with gestational diabetes are often premature and/or large for their gestational age. These babies are also at higher risk for certain health problems.

**Low blood sugar**
When the mother has gestational diabetes, the unborn baby is exposed to high blood sugar levels. As a result, the baby makes extra insulin to keep his/her own blood sugar under control.

After birth, the baby is no longer exposed to the mother’s blood. If the baby continues to make extra insulin, it may push his/her blood sugar levels too low (**hypoglycemia**).

Very low blood sugar can cause seizures, which can result in long-term delays in development. Feeding the baby will often return blood sugar levels to normal. If needed, the healthcare team can also give the baby a sugar (**glucose**) solution through a vein.
Understanding Gestational Diabetes (continued)

**How can gestational diabetes affect my baby? (continued)**

### Type 2 Diabetes
When the mother has gestational diabetes, the baby has a higher risk of being obese and developing type 2 diabetes later in life. You can lower that risk by helping your child make healthy choices while growing up. These choices include eating right, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight.

### Jaundice
Babies with a yellowish color to their skin and the whites of their eyes are said to have jaundice. In most cases, jaundice is short-term and causes no lasting problems.

### Respiratory Distress Syndrome
Babies with respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) have to work hard to breathe. They may need help to get enough oxygen.

### Other Health Problems
Gestational diabetes can affect any organ. A few babies may have heart or other problems. Your health care team will keep you up-to-date on your baby’s health.

**What will happen next?**
Most babies will respond well to the correct treatment. But every baby is different. The health care team will talk with you about what is best for your baby.

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**Glossary**

- **Diabetes** – disease in which blood sugar levels are too high
- **Gestational** – during pregnancy
- **Glucose** – a type of sugar the body uses for energy
- **Hyperglycemia** – too much sugar in the blood
- **Hypoglycemia** – too little sugar in the blood
- **Insulin** – hormone that helps control blood sugar levels

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**Ask the health care team when you have questions—they are there to help.**

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