

## Healthy Lifestyle Post-Gestational Diabetes

Congratulations on your new baby! This information aims to provide you with further information on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle to reduce or delay your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes in the future.

**“Up to 50% of women with Gestational Diabetes (GDM) develop diabetes within 5 years of the birth” (NICE, 2020)**

It is easy to relax and lose track of healthy eating and maintaining good physical activity levels once your baby is born. Although GDM normally goes away after pregnancy, it may reappear in future pregnancies, and women who have had it are also at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It may be that you were already eating healthily, or perhaps you made positive changes once you were given the diagnosis of GDM; either way it is important to continue following the advice in this leaflet to reduce the risk of developing diabetes in the future.

### Future monitoring

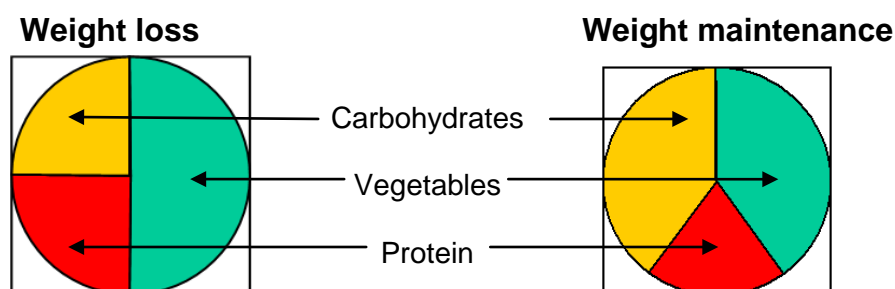
It is important that you have a blood test, called ‘HbA1c’, 13 weeks after your baby is born to ensure you no longer have diabetes. You should receive an appointment for this after the delivery of your baby. A yearly blood test at your GP surgery is then necessary to check for development of Type 2 diabetes so it can be treated appropriately.

If the test shows you have ‘pre-diabetes’ (blood glucose levels above the normal range but not classed as type 2 diabetes), you will be eligible for the Diabetes Prevention Programme. This is a national initiative providing tailored, personalised advice to reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes. This includes support with healthy eating and lifestyle, managing weight and bespoke physical exercise programmes. Please speak to your GP if you are interested in this.

### Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight will reduce your risk of diabetes in the future. Weight may be managed by adjusting your portion sizes, reducing high sugar and high fat snacks, and avoiding adding extra fat to meals whether during or after cooking (oil, butter, etc.). Breast-feeding may also aid weight loss.

Here is a simple guide as to how you may wish to portion a meal on your plate but there are further suggestions on the following pages:

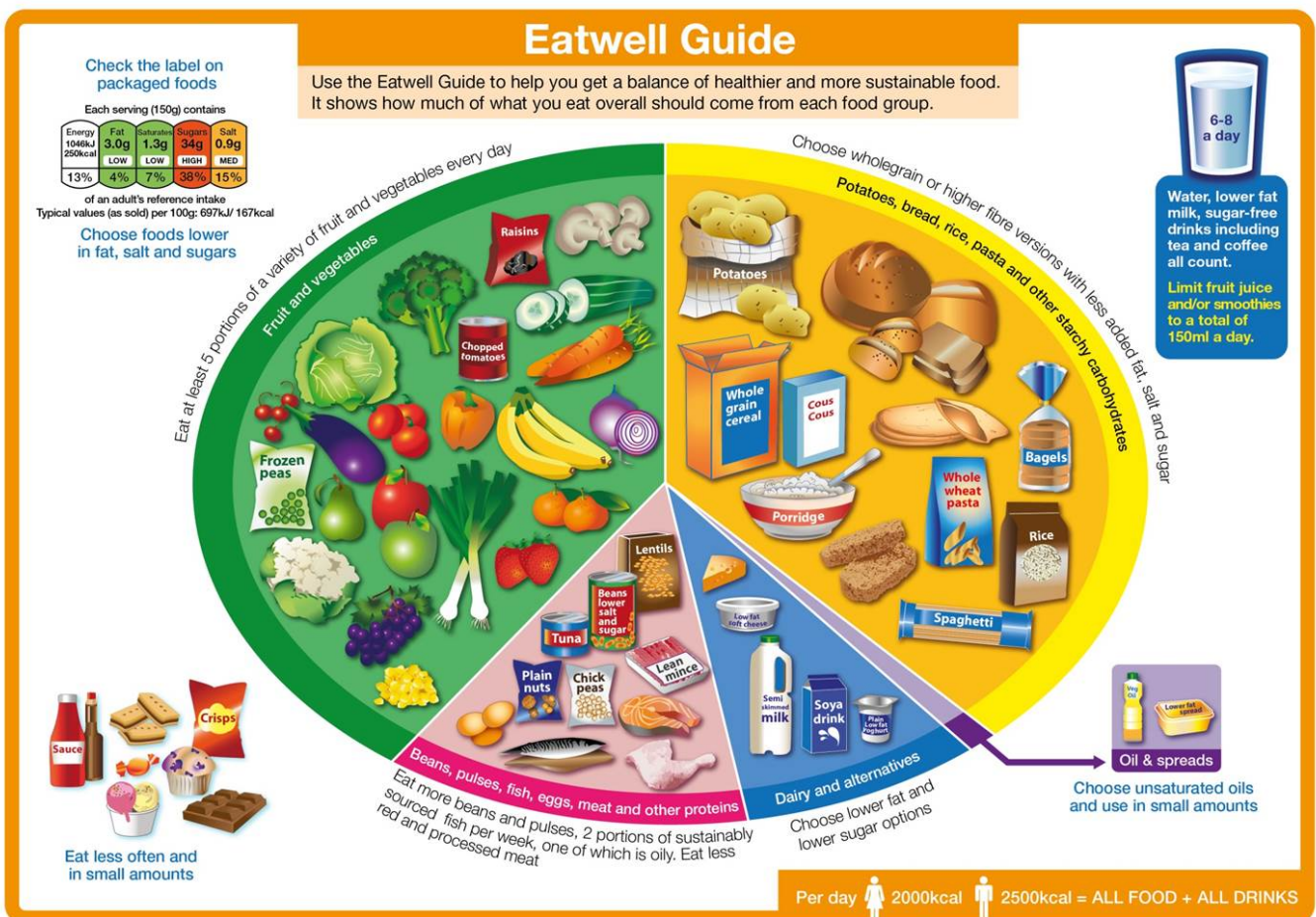


Gaining weight around your middle (an 'apple' body shape) is associated with a greater risk of diabetes compared with weight stored around the bottom and thighs (a 'pear' body shape).



## The Eatwell Guide:

The model below can be used to help get the balance right when it comes to the spread of different foods and drinks across the day. Including a variety of items from each food group in the proportions below will ensure you achieve a healthy nutritious diet. Regular meals are recommended, as research has shown that skipping meals makes managing weight more difficult.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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## Recommended portion sizes

### Fruit and vegetables

Aim for at least 5 portions a day, to reduce risk of heart disease and cancer. 1 portion would be 80g or what fits comfortably in the palm of your hand, e.g.:

- ✓ 10-12 grapes
- ✓ 1 medium fruit (banana/ apple/ orange)
- ✓ 2 small fruits (plums/ satsumas)
- ✓ ½ large fruit (grapefruit)
- ✓ 1 slice very large fruit (melon/ pineapple)
- ✓ 30g/1 tablespoon dried fruit
- ✓ 150ml glass unsweetened juice/ smoothie
- ✓ 1 dessert/cereal bowl salad
- ✓ 3 heaped tablespoons vegetables
- ✓ The more variety the better to obtain an optimal range of vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Often a better choice for snacks or puddings if trying to manage weight due to low fat, high fibre content.

### Dairy

Try to have 3 portions a day, for healthy bones and teeth, and protein e.g.

- 1 glass milk (200ml)
- 1 small pot yoghurt (125g)
- 1 matchbox size piece hard cheese (30g) or 2 matchboxes (80g) soft cheese
- ✓ Try to opt for lower fat varieties to avoid excess energy/ calorie intake and weight gain.
- ✓ If using dairy alternatives, make sure they are fortified with calcium and unsweetened.

### High fat or sugary foods and drinks

- ✓ These do not need to be eliminated completely.
- ✓ Reducing intake can help to manage weight better.
- ✓ Have only occasionally and compare labels if you want to choose lower fat/ sugar varieties.
- ✓ Consider portion sizes
  - Jam/honey = 1 heaped teaspoon

### Protein (non-dairy)

- ✓ Try to have 2 portions a day, e.g.
  - Meat/ poultry/ oily fish – size of a pack of playing cards
  - White fish – size of a cheque book
  - 2 eggs
  - 4 heaped tablespoons pulses (beans/ chickpeas/ lentils/ dhal) or meat alternatives (tofu/soya)
- ✓ Aim for at least 2 portions fish per week (at least one should be oily – salmon/ mackerel/ sardines/ fresh tuna) to optimise heart health.
- ✓ Reduce fat intake by choosing lean varieties, cut off visible fat/skin, and avoid adding extra butter/ oil/ ghee during cooking or creamy sauces.

### Starchy carbohydrates

Aim to include a serving at each meal:

- 3-6 tablespoons cereal/porridge
  - 2 slices bread
  - 4-6 heaped tablespoons cooked rice/pasta
  - Fist-size amount of potatoes
- Try to include more wholegrain varieties as these are high in fibre and keep you feeling fuller for longer.

### Oil and spreads

- Unsaturated varieties are better for cholesterol levels (e.g. olive, rapeseed, sunflower oil or spreads based on these).
- All fats are high in calories so use in small amount to help manage weight
- A portion =
  - Butter/spread = end of thumb
  - Oil = 1 level teaspoon
  - Mayonnaise/full fat dressings = 1 level teaspoon

## Useful sources of information

A range of Food Fact Sheets provided by the British Dietetic Association - <https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food>

For more information about the 'Eat well guide': [www.gov.uk/government/Eatwell\\_guide\\_booklet](http://www.gov.uk/government/Eatwell_guide_booklet)

Physical activity guidelines for adults (19-64 years) fact sheet:

[www.gov.uk/government/physical/activity/guideline](http://www.gov.uk/government/physical/activity/guideline)

**Every 10 Minutes counts!**

## Physical activity

To reduce the risk of certain diseases (including Type 2 diabetes), and help maintain a healthy weight and healthy mind, the government recommends: (Department of Health, 2011)



- ✓ At least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week (or 75 minutes vigorous intensity).
  - this can be split up however you prefer, whether 30 minutes 5 times a week or shorter 10 minute bouts of activity when you can fit it in.
  - examples of moderate intensity includes cycling, brisk walking, swimming (which makes you breath harder, gets your heart rate up and feel warmer).
- ✓ Everyone should minimise the amount of time they spend sedentary (sat down) for prolonged periods.
- ✓ Muscle strengthening activities are also encouraged on at least 2 days per week.
  - examples include exercising with weights or carrying or moving heavy loads (groceries)

## Smoking

Don't underestimate the invaluable health benefits that come with quitting smoking! Improvements can be seen all round the body, including the lungs, heart, immune system, teeth and gums, skin and aging, and fertility.

Better energy levels, taste and smell, and ability to breath and cough less also make life more enjoyable. In fact, lung capacity improves by up to 10% within nine months (NHS Choices, 2016).

Protect your loved ones by preventing second-hand smoking. Passive smoking doubles the risk of children getting chest illnesses, such as pneumonia, wheezing and asthma, and chest infections, and triples the risk of lung cancer later in life (NHS Choices, 2016).

If you'd like support to give up smoking please see: [www.quit51.co.uk](http://www.quit51.co.uk)

## Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed your baby, as well as providing tailored nutrition for your growing baby, it helps to protect against infections, and can help develop your bond with your baby. It may also reduce the chance of your baby developing diabetes later in life and can help you regain your figure.

Women who have had GDM are encouraged and supported to breast feed their babies if they choose to do so. Even if your baby is in a Special Care Baby Unit, milk can be expressed and fed to your baby.

If you have any queries or problems with breast feeding, contact your Health Visitor in the first instance. You can also contact the National Childbirth Trust on 0870 4448708.

## Sources of information

E.g. specialist nurse, ward, consultant secretary, self-help group, national bodies or Web site addresses.

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:  
The Diabetes Department and the Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Next review date: February 2024

Responsible clinician/author: Josie Townsend, Lead Diabetes Specialist Dietitian