



For most women, pregnancy is a joyous time filled with much anticipation. It is, however, not the same for everyone. Some people feel afraid and apprehensive, and some are uncertain about how to best look after themselves and their unborn baby. Several Clinix Hospitals have maternity facilities, which means that advice and medical assistance is readily and easily accessible.

At Clinix, we also offer a Maternity Cash Package for expectant mothers so that they can have first-class care for the birth of their babies. This package includes one day of normal delivery, two days of post-delivery care, a free mother-and-baby pack, a framed photo of your baby, and free birth certificate registration.

Payment can be done on a lay-by basis over six months, prior to delivery. To book and make arrangements, contact our accounts department.

Diabetes in Pregnancy

The number of patients with diabetes in pregnancy has been increasing. It is referred to as Pregnancy-induced Diabetes Mellitus (Gestational Diabetes Mellitus, GDM), while the rest are primarily pre-existing type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes. The rise in GDM and type 2 diabetes is largely due to our eating habits, lack of exercise and obesity (a concerning worldwide problem).

Both type 1 and 2 diabetes in pregnancy pose much greater mother and foetus risk than GDM. Risks of uncontrolled diabetes in pregnancy include:

1. Spontaneous miscarriage.
2. Foetal abnormalities (like Down Syndrome).
3. Complications of Hypertension (Pre-eclampsia).
4. Foetal death.
5. Macrosomia (Big Baby Syndrome i.e. > 4kg birth weight).
6. Neonatal hypoglycaemia (Low sugar in babies).
7. Neonatal hyperbilirubinemia. (Abnormal Bilirubin leading to jaundice).
8. Childhood Obesity and Childhood type 2 diabetes, and diabetes later in life.

PREGNANCY PLANNING

Preconception counselling should be incorporated into routine diabetes care in all women with reproductive potential. Effective contraception should be used until a woman is prepared and ready to become pregnant. Preconception counselling should address the importance of Diabetes Mellitus management as close to normal as is safely possible.

Your Obstetrician, General Practitioner (GP) or midwife would ideally do a blood test called HbA1C. The ideal level is 6.5% (48 mmol/mol), to reduce the risk of congenital abnormalities, hypertension and pre-eclampsia, Big Baby Syndrome and other complications.

Women with pre-existing diabetes who are planning pregnancy or are pregnant should be counselled on the risk of development and/or progression of vision impairment due to diabetes (Diabetic retinopathy). An Eye Specialist (Ophthalmologist) should do a dilated eye examination, ideally before pregnancy or in the first trimester, and then patients should be monitored every trimester, as well as for 1-year postpartum.

Managing Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM)

Lifestyle change is a critical part of managing GDM and may be sufficient for many women. If required, medications can be added to achieve normal glucose levels or targets.

Insulin (A naturally existing hormone secreted by your pancreas), can be scientifically manufactured for diabetic patients and formulated in injections like (Insulin pens). This hormone is the preferred medication for treating high sugar levels (hyperglycaemia) as it does not cross the placenta to any measurable extent.

Oral medication like Metformin, Gliclazide and Glycomin should NOT be used as first-line agents, as both cross the placenta to the foetus. All oral medication lack long-term safety data. Metformin, popularly used to treat PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) in women to induce ovulation, should be discontinued once pregnancy has been confirmed.

Managing pre-existing Types 1 and 2 diabetes

Insulin is the preferred medication for management of both type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes in pregnancy because it does not cross the placenta. Oral agents are generally insufficient to overcome the insulin resistance in type 2 diabetes and are ineffective in type 1 diabetes.

Pregnancy and drugs

In pregnant patients with diabetes and other chronic conditions like hypertension, blood pressure targets of between 130/90–105/75 mmHg are suggested in the interest of optimizing long-term pregnancy health and minimizing impaired foetal growth. Some blood pressure medication can be “potentially poisonous” to your growing baby. Please consult your Obstetrician or GP if you are on any chronic hypertension medication. (Examples of such medication fall into the following groups:

1. Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, e.g. Perindopril, Captopril, Enalapril, Lisinopril.
2. Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), e.g. Losartan, Valsartan, Olmesartan,
3. Cholesterol medication (Also called statins), e.g. Simvastatin.

Such medication should be AVOIDED in sexually active women who are not using reliable contraception, and definitely avoided in pregnant women!

Maintain a healthy diet

Eating well during pregnancy is essential for both mom and baby. This means ensuring that you eat a good balance of fruits and vegetables, carbohydrates, fats and proteins. While many believe that you need to ‘eat for two’ when you are expecting, this is certainly not the case. For the first and second trimester, you should eat as you ordinarily would, and in the third trimester you may add up to 200 additional calories per day. Vitamins also play a major role in a healthy pregnancy. Folic acid and vitamin D are critical for healthy development of your baby. There are many pregnancy multi-vitamins in the market, all of which contain the correct doses for the needs of your growing baby. Be sure to drink enough fluids throughout as the amount of water in your body increases during pregnancy to help you maintain healthy blood pressure levels. If you are uncertain about your diet, talk to your doctor or midwife about what you should be eating.

Improve your food hygiene

Food hygiene is hugely important while you are expecting. Ensure that your hands have been thoroughly washed or sanitised before you handle any foods. Thoroughly wash your utensils, preparation boards and hands after handling raw meat of any kind. There are also some foods that you should be avoiding as they potentially carry bacteria or parasites that could be harmful to you or your baby. Listeriosis is of particular concern as it can cause miscarriage, and the following foods should be avoided as they contain the listeria bacteria:

- Unpasteurised milk
- Undercooked or raw meats
- Pates such as chicken liver or duck pate
- Soft cheeses
- Raw or partially cooked eggs

Also avoid foods that have potential to cause stomach upset or abdominal discomfort:

- Chilli/spicy food.
- Poorly processed flour preparations which can lead to constipation (rolls, buns, white bread).
- Gas-forming food like beans, lentils, cabbage and wheat.
- Potentially spoiled food (always opt for freshly prepared food).

Don't forget to exercise

Gentle exercise, unless otherwise specified by your doctor or midwife, is safe throughout your pregnancy. In fact, exercise will:

- Help you to cope with changes your body is going through, and the pressure on your joints during pregnancy.
- Help you maintain a healthy pregnancy weight.
- Increase your chance of an uncomplicated labour and birth.
- Improve your mood.
- Help prevent certain pregnancy complications.
- Help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight much easier.

Ask your doctor or midwife if you are unsure of what kind of exercises you should be doing. Safe exercise usually includes activities such as walking, swimming, or yoga. Many gyms also have classes specifically for pregnant women.

Avoid alcohol and smoking

Alcohol and smoking can negatively affect the growth and development of your baby. Pregnant women who regularly drink heavily are at risk of giving birth to babies with foetal alcohol syndrome or disorders which can result in complications such as learning difficulties and birth defects. If you smoke, it's best to stop, for your own health and that of your baby. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight. Stop as soon as you can – it's never too late! Even stopping in the last few weeks of your pregnancy can benefit you both.

Get enough rest

Pregnancy can leave your body feeling exhausted. Take regular naps when you can and be sure to get as much sleep as possible in the evenings. Put in place a relaxing bedtime routine to ensure that you unwind enough to have a good rest. Dealing with ANY chronic illness is trying at the best of times. Having to manage the illness when you are pregnant adds more complexity that can feel overwhelming. Below we provide some information on diabetes during pregnancy, as well as how to manage it, in order to have the safest possible pregnancy for both you and your baby.

Make an appointment with your doctor as soon as you can.

When you find out that you are pregnant, make an appointment to see a doctor at your nearest Clinix Maternity Hospital. A doctor or midwife will be able to assist you with all the information you require and will perform all the relevant tests and examinations necessary for the first trimester.

Seeing your doctor from the very beginning means that you will have the best advice for a healthy pregnancy right from the start. Visit any of these Clinix Hospitals to ensure the best care for you and your baby.

- Botshelong Empilweni Private Hospital (Marimba Gardens **VOSLOORUS**)
- Dr SK Matseke Memorial Hospital (Diepkloof **SOWETO**)
- Victoria Itokolle Private Hospital (Victoria Road **MAFIKENG**)
- Tshepo Themba Private Hospital (Dobsonville **SOWETO**)
- Naledi Nkanyenzi Private Hospital (Moshoeshoe Street **SEBOKENG**)

Some days being pregnant might feel overwhelming, and staying healthy might feel like hard work, and that's okay too. Reach out to your doctor or midwife for support – we have dealt with it more times than we can count. At Clinix, we are here for you, and for your baby.

Source: *Management of Diabetes in Pregnancy: Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes-2019 Diabetes Care* 2019;42(Suppl. 1):S165–S172 | <https://doi.org/10.2337/dc19-S014>