Is Breastfeeding Okay for Diabetics?

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Diabetes and Breastfeeding

Whether you have type II diabetes or gestational diabetes, you may be wondering if you should plan to breastfeed your baby or not. You may think that your high blood sugar may be transferred to the baby or possibly your medications, if you take them.

You will find that breastfeeding has many positive attributes that benefit both you and the baby. By monitoring your diet, you can have a successful experience with breastfeeding. Some women find they need less insulin to regulate blood sugars. Oxytocin, a hormone that reverses stress, helps with lower blood sugar and promotes well-being for the mom, physically and emotionally.

Benefits for Your Baby

Breast milk is the best nutrition for your baby, by far. Your body knows how to produce milk that is especially formulated just for your baby. It has many advantages for the child such as:

- Decreased chance for respiratory infections
- Higher IQ
- Better immunity against pathogens
- Decreased chance for high blood pressure
- Less likely to develop asthma
- Decreased risk for diabetes
- Less likely to be obese in childhood

Benefits for You

Breastfeeding reduces your risk for obesity and heart disease. The longer it is done, the lower the risks. Other benefits are as follows:

- Less likely to develop osteoporosis
- Less likely to develop arthritis
- Lower risk for cancers of the breast, uterus, and ovaries
- Recovery time after birth of child is quicker and easier
- In the case of gestational diabetes, it can help your blood sugar stabilize.

Tips To Follow

Even though breastfeeding is actually a good thing for women with diabetes, you will need to watch your blood sugars more closely. You may find your blood sugars going too low at times. To prevent hypoglycemia, try to:

- Snack before and during nursing to keep your blood sugars regulated.
- Drink water or other beverage (no caffeine) while the baby is nursing.
- Always keep something high in carbs near you when you nurse. If you need a snack, then you don't need to stop your baby's nursing.

Many women lose weight after having their baby, and breastfeeding will expedite the process. This is always a big plus for mothers who want to go back to their pre-pregnancy weight quickly. Just be sure not to cut back on eating just to lose weight. You need to eat a balanced diet with protein and vitamins plus minerals to replenish your body's supply since it goes through the breast milk. Your dietician or healthcare provider can help you develop a meal plan that allows you to lose weight gradually and sustain breastfeeding a baby.

Your doctor will have special instructions for you if you take insulin or oral medications that lower your blood sugar. Most medications are safe when breastfeeding.