

Healthy diet in early pregnancy reduces risk of gestational diabetes

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A healthy, comprehensive diet that lowers the body's inflammation reduces the risk of gestational diabetes mellitus, reveals a new study from the University of Turku in Finland.

Obesity is a significant risk factor for developing gestational [diabetes](#)

mellitus, and an increasing number of pregnant women are overweight or obese. Dietary habits have an impact on both obesity and the onset of gestational diabetes mellitus.

The mother-child study conducted at the University of Turku and Turku University Hospital in Finland examined the connection between dietary intake and onset of gestational diabetes in 351 overweight or obese women.

The women's nutrient intake was calculated from food diaries, on the basis of which two dietary patterns, a healthier and an unhealthier dietary pattern, were recognized. In addition, the overall quality of the [diet](#) in reference to that recommended was described with a diet quality index and the inflammatory potential with a dietary inflammatory index.

"Our research results show that following a [healthy diet](#) in early pregnancy reduces the risk of gestational diabetes," says first author and doctoral candidate Lotta Pajunen from the Institute of Biomedicine at the University of Turku.

Diet that increases body's inflammation heightens the risk of gestational diabetes

The study also found that a higher dietary inflammatory index, meaning a diet that increases the low-grade inflammatory markers in the body was connected to an increased risk of developing [gestational diabetes mellitus](#). Furthermore, a higher consumption of fat and especially saturated fats was connected to gestational diabetes. This is of interest as the intake of saturated fats is known to increase the body's inflammation.

Several methods were used in the study to examine the [dietary intake](#) in early pregnancy. These analyses revealed that a diet comprehensively

promoting health is associated with a smaller risk of developing gestational diabetes.

"Eating vegetables, fruit, berries, and wholegrain products as well as unsaturated fats is particularly important. These nutrients and foods reduce [inflammation](#) in the body and therefore also the risk of gestational diabetes. Mothers who are overweight or obese already before the pregnancy would most likely benefit from dietary guidance in early pregnancy," says Associate Professor in Nutrition Kirsi Laitinen from the University of Turku, the PI of the Early Nutrition and Health research group that conducted the study.

More information: Lotta Pajunen et al, A healthy dietary pattern with a low inflammatory potential reduces the risk of gestational diabetes mellitus, *European Journal of Nutrition* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s00394-021-02749-z](#)

Provided by University of Turku

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