

Blood Glucose (Sugar) Screening

The standard recommended blood glucose levels are the same, though higher blood glucose levels are not uncommon during pregnancy. Unfortunately, hormones produced by the body during pregnancy can prevent insulin from doing its job to help the glucose from food get out of the blood and into the cells of the body for energy. When this happens, blood glucose levels can get too high, causing diabetes. This type of diabetes that occurs as a result of pregnancy is referred to as Gestational Diabetes and usually starts during the middle of pregnancy. Pregnant women with any type of diabetes must take care to control their blood glucose and do their best to keep it within the normal range during pregnancy. Health care providers will closely monitor Mom and Baby. Women who are unable to control their blood glucose by watching their diets may have to take some type of diabetes medication. Most women are able to successfully control their blood sugar, avoiding any harm to them or their babies. One notable issue is that pregnant women with diabetes tend to have larger babies at birth, which means there is a greater chance of problems during delivery (e.g., birth injury, c-section).

Cholesterol Screening

Elevated cholesterol and triglyceride levels are common during pregnancy. These changes appear to be due to hormones. Therefore, most doctors do not recommend cholesterol testing during pregnancy. Cholesterol is actually an important nutrient involved in a baby's brain development. Cholesterol levels usually drop around four weeks post partum so most labs recommend waiting until six weeks after giving birth to test cholesterol. If you have high cholesterol prior to pregnancy or any other concerns related to cholesterol and/or triglyceride screening, talk to your doctor or other primary healthcare provider about it.

Body Fat Screening

Onsite screening equipment may not be accurate for pregnant women. But maintaining a healthy body fat, and weight, is an important goal that pregnant women should have. Body fat is involved in supporting normal hormone activity, thus a woman must have enough of it to even conceive a pregnancy. However, as with anyone, too much body fat is linked to all sorts of problems. It is very important that pregnant women are careful about their nutrition and weight gain during pregnancy. Many people think pregnant women can eat as much as they want and/or that they are "eating for two." Neither is the case. Most women need only about 300 additional calories per day. Women who begin pregnancy at a healthy weight should gain about 25-35 pounds, women who begin underweight should gain about 28-40 pounds, women who begin overweight should gain only 15-25 pounds, and women who begin obese should gain only 11-20 pounds during the nine months. These amounts are higher for twins, etc. The key is to gain the right amount of weight for your body.

Bone Mineral Density Screening

Standard result recommendations are the same during pregnancy and lactation. What is important to consider is that it is possible, and normal, for a woman to lose and regain 3-10% of her bone density during a few months of that time. The adult skeleton contains approximately 99% of calcium in the body. A woman's body may break down her own calcium in her bones in order to provide for a growing baby. This is why pregnant and lactating women are encouraged to take calcium and vitamin D supplements.

Physical Activity

During pregnancy, hormones are released that relax the joints, particularly in the pelvis so the baby has room to pass through the birth canal. Unfortunately, the relaxation of other joints may cause them to have some abnormal motion. For this reason, pregnant women need to be careful with their physical activity. Activities that stress the lower back and pelvis particularly should be minimized. Another key to exercise during pregnancy is that a woman should not get over heated.