

## Leading the fight against diabetes

AS you know, diabetes is a chronic condition associated with abnormally high levels of glucose in the blood. However, are you aware that individuals with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) such as heart disease and stroke, accounting for approximately 35% of total deaths in Malaysia?<sup>(1)</sup> According to the *National Health and Morbidity Survey* (NHMS), the prevalence of diabetes among Malaysians saw an increasing trend from 13.4% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2019.<sup>(2)</sup> While the rise was mostly seen in the middle-aged and elderly, there is an increasing trend in young adults

as well.<sup>(3)</sup>

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, many employees have transitioned to working from home to flatten the curve and get the pandemic under control. While working from home offers numerous benefits, it also makes it easier to slip into a sedentary lifestyle. A challenge faced by most people working from home is eating unhealthy snacks high in sugar, sodium and fat in between meals. Consequently, weight gain contributes to obesity which increases the risk of developing diabetes.

What can you do to bring a different approach to staying healthy while working from home? You can try workouts such as jumping jacks, push-ups, squats and plank. Diet modifications such as

lower the risk of developing diabetes.

Oat beta-glucan is a soluble dietary fibre which can be found in oat bran, the outer layer of oat grains. It has been reported that the high viscosity of the oat beta-glucan plays a vital role in regulating blood glucose levels<sup>4</sup>, and such beneficial health effect is associated with its daily dose and molecular weight. The high molecular weight of oat beta-glucan has been mainly attributed to its ability to form a viscous gel which acts as a barrier in the small intestine that delays the digestion of carbohydrates and absorption of glucose. Thus, it helps to prevent sudden fluctuations in blood glucose levels and abnormal insulin secretion after a meal, resulting in stabilised glucose availability.

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- 3g of oat beta-glucan daily helps to lower blood cholesterol levels.
- Oat soluble fibre (beta-glucan)

helps lower the rise of blood glucose, provided it is not consumed together with other food.

- Consumption of beta-glucan from oats contributes to the reduction of glucose rise after a meal.

A daily serving of two scoops or sachets of Biogrow Oat BG22 oat bran powder (≈18g) provides \*3g of clinically proven bioactive oat beta-glucan with high molecular weight, which lowers the rise of blood glucose and cholesterol levels significantly. Hence, not only is Biogrow Oat BG22 suitable for individuals with high blood cholesterol levels, it is also suitable for pre-diabetic and diabetic patients as it is low in GI (<55) which helps to stabilise post-meal blood glucose levels. Biogrow Oat BG22 also has good solubility and is low in calories, high in fibre and lactose-free with no added sugar, artificial ingredients and preservatives.

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■ For more information, call 03-7956 2220 (Mondays to Fridays, 9am – 5pm) or email [info@biogrow.com.my](mailto:info@biogrow.com.my).

\*Bioactive oat beta-glucans are high in molecular weight and have been scientifically shown to produce a good viscosity effect in the gut for optimal cholesterol-lowering effect.<sup>(5)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup>Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD) Country Profiles. World Health Organization. 2018.

<sup>(2)</sup>Alberti G et al. *Type 2 Diabetes in the Young: The Evolving Epidemic. The International Diabetes Federation Consensus Workshop*. 2004; 27(7), 1798-1811.

<sup>(3)</sup>Survey: 1.7 million Malaysians Risk Three Chronic Conditions. CodeBlue. 2020.

<sup>(4)</sup>Daou C & Zhang H. *Oat Beta-Glucan: Its Role in Health Promotion and Prevention of Diseases. Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety*. 2012; 4(11), 355-365.

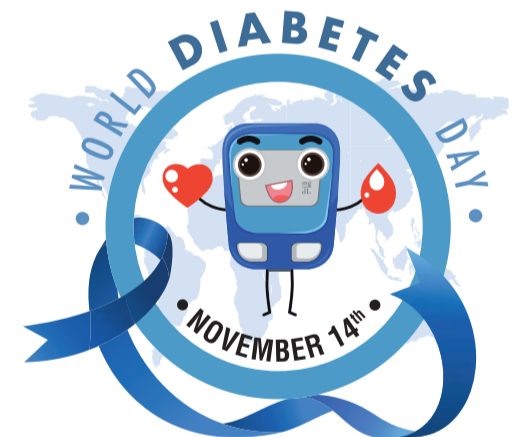
<sup>(5)</sup>EFSA Journal 2010; 8(12):1885 & 2011; 9(6):2207.



## What is Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM)?

It is a condition of high blood glucose level detected in pregnant women, also known as glucose intolerant.

\*1 in 20 Malaysians have diabetes = **57%** of them are **WOMEN**



## Women with GDM had a 10x greater risk of developing to Type 2 diabetes (T2DM)

To prevent and manage the disease:

### Always check for:

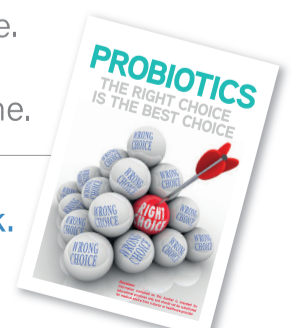
- Body Mass Index (BMI).
- Blood pressure.
- Cholesterol level.
- Blood sugar level.

### Always practice:

- Exercise and stay active.
- Balanced and healthy diet.
- Control alcohol and sugar intake.
- Avoid smoking.
- Enhance healthy gut microbiome.



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# New challenges during the pandemic

DIABETES is a metabolic disorder caused by either your body not making enough insulin, or not using the insulin it makes effectively. When your blood glucose increases, it can lead to many complications including death.

According to the 2019 *National Health and Morbidity Survey*, the prevalence of diabetes among adults above 18 years is 18.3% which is a 4% increase from 2015. Sadly, nearly half (48.6%) had not been diagnosed before the survey. It was also noted that one in five Malaysians above 18 years suffered from diabetes.

The rise in number could be due to genetic factors, obesity, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet. Among the Asian population, insulin resistance and visceral adiposity are the main key factors. Fat has been linked to metabolic disturbances and increased risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Consultant physician and endocrinologist at MSU Medical Centre Dr Rohaya Abdul Razak explains "As everybody is aware, diabetes is a progressive life-long disease that affects our body's ability to properly regulate glucose use for growth and energy. Glucose is the main source of energy for our body. When it is not properly managed, it will lead to high blood glucose levels that cause damage to many target organs, mainly the heart, kidney, eye, brain and nerves. The impacts of having diabetes are endless. These include physical disabilities, emotional and psychological effects, and financial burdens to both family members and the community."

Generally, there are three common types of diabetes.

**1) Type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM)** occurs when the pancreas cannot produce insulin. This is because the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas are destroyed by an autoimmune process.

**2) Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM)** occurs when the pancreas does not produce sufficient insulin or the insulin does not work properly due to the presence of insulin resistance.

**3) Gestational diabetes (GDM)** occurs when hormonal changes occur during pregnancy causing a rise in blood glucose levels. Usually, it will resolve after childbirth.

Early last year, Malaysia launched a new clinical practice guideline for the *Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus*. In this guideline, there are new recommendations for the management of diabetes which include several new classes of diabetic medications to lower high blood glucose levels and cardiovascular and kidney protection from diabetes-related damage. Recent studies also showed losing weight can prevent people from becoming diabetic. Those with newly diagnosed T2DM (less than three years) can reverse their diabetes by losing 15% of their body weight and maintaining it. It also benefits the liver by improving non-alcoholic liver disease (NAFLD), which if left untreated, may lead to liver damage, scarring and cancer.

## New challenges for people living with diabetes

During the Covid-19 pandemic, people with diabetes tend to experience a more severe form of Covid-19 infection and have a higher risk of death than non-diabetics. One reason is that high blood glucose weakens the immune system and makes it less able to fight off infections. The risk of severe coronavirus infection is higher if you have other conditions like heart and lung diseases. The infection could put you at greater risk for diabetes complications like diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA happens



Dr Rohaya Abdul Razak.

when high levels of acids called ketones build up in your blood and can be very serious. Older people are also at higher risk of developing complications if they get infected.

Therefore, the best course of action is to ensure the glycaemic level is under control with regular monitoring and compliance with treatment. Getting vaccinated also reduces the chance of getting infected.

People with diabetes should step up all measures of self-care to stay healthy and well.

1) Continue taking regular medications and ensure you have an adequate supply of medications. For those who are on injections, especially insulin, please ensure you have enough supply of needles and glucose strips.

2) Check your blood glucose regularly and keep it well controlled. If your blood glucose becomes unstable, please see your healthcare provider immediately.

3) If you are under quarantine, get a

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family member to assist with accessing healthy fresh foods. Avoid processed foods if possible.

4) Avoid a sedentary lifestyle. You should aim to increase or at least maintain your regular exercise routine.

5) Avoid snacking or eating unhealthy foods.

6) Do not skip routine follow-ups with your regular physician.

If you experience any Covid-19 symptoms, seek expert advice and get medical attention immediately. Stay safe and keep healthy.

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# Hidden danger for mothers-to-be

PREGNANCY is a journey as risky as it is rewarding. Gestational diabetes – also known as maternal diabetes or gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) – poses one such risk as it causes higher sugar concentrations in the blood which can lead to complications for both the mother and child.

While gestational diabetes can happen to any expecting mother, it is more likely to occur in women who have pre-existing conditions such as:

- Obesity
- Hypertension

Gestational diabetes can happen at any stage of a pregnancy, but more commonly shows up during the second or third trimester.

- Being an older maternal age
- Previously having a baby who weighed 10kg or more at birth

Gestational diabetes can happen at any stage of a pregnancy, but more commonly shows up during the second or third trimester. It does not have any apparent symptoms and is mostly discovered during tests for blood sugar levels. However, if an expectant mother experiences drowsiness, dry mouth and increased thirst, she should be on alert as these symptoms are signs of her blood sugar getting too high.

If left untreated, the complications that GDM may cause include premature birth and foetal macrosomia, a condition where the baby is born with a larger weight and may require induced labour or a C-section delivery. GDM may also cause stillbirths, although this is fortunately a very rare occurrence.

According to the *National Health and Morbidity Survey 2016* report, 13.5% of Malaysian mothers aged 15 to 45 were diagnosed with GDM, while older mothers were at a greater risk. In a 2019 study titled *Gestational hyperglycaemia in Malaysia: early screening and intervention to improve outcomes of pregnancy*, 10% to 15% of Malaysian women overall have been diagnosed with GDM.

The Ministry of Health Malaysia's clinical practice guidelines recommend that pregnant women at risk be screened for GDM at booking or as early as possible, with others screened between week 24 and week 28 of gestation (pregnancy) using a modified oral glucose tolerance test.

Fortunately, gestational diabetes can



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# Probiotics for postpartum care

DIABETES is a major public health concern in Malaysia, but most Malaysians are not fully aware of the health complications and risks that come with the disease. The disease can cause long-term complications in individuals, such as developing heart diseases or chronic kidney disorders.

Diabetes can impact anyone, even expectant mothers. Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is a type of diabetes that may develop during pregnancy in women who have previously never been diagnosed with diabetes. This happens when body changes include insulin resistance, which could result in GDM.

Recent studies have shown that women with GDM had 10 times the risk of developing type 2 diabetes (T2DM) than women with normal blood sugar levels. This is supported by data shown in the *National Diabetes Registry Report 2020*, where 5.213% of the Malaysian population have T2DM, and of these patients, 57.02% are women. The key risk factors include:

- Asian ethnicity
- Obesity
- Advanced maternal age
- Multiparity
- Family history of T2DM
- Early GDM diagnosis
- History of GDM recurrence
- Requirement for hypoglycaemic medicines during pregnancy

hypoglycaemic medicines during pregnancy

Efforts to prevent the advancement of the disease had been largely unsuccessful.



Prof Dr Norfilza Mohd Mokhtar is the principal investigator and the group leader of Gut Research Group, Faculty of Medicine, UKM.

However, a recent study by local researchers has found that including probiotics in women's postpartum diet can help decrease the likelihood of developing glucose intolerance and T2DM.

The study, titled *The Roles of Probiotics in the Gut Microbiota Composition and Metabolic Outcomes in Asymptomatic Post-Gestational Diabetes Women: A Randomized Controlled Trial*, was published in the journal *Nutrients*.

Members of the GUT Research Group, UKM, who analysed a 12-week probiotic supplementation regime for women in their postpartum period were Prof Dr Raja Affendi Raja Ali, Prof Dr Norfilza Mohd Mokhtar, Dr Zubaidah Hasain, Dr Hajar Fauzan

Ahmad and Prof Dr Tong Seng Fah.

The research generated interest as it focused on the need for comprehensive postpartum care plans that include probiotics to protect post-GDM women from developing glucose intolerance and T2DM.

The research highlighted existing data where the glucose metabolism in pregnant women with GDM is directly associated with the gut microbiota that functions to help support energy harvesting, digestion and immune defence. Experts believe the changes or imbalance of a woman's gut microbiota (gut dysbiosis) may remain postpartum, which can delay or accelerate the onset of GDM.

The researchers' findings showed that the balance of gut microbiota and glucose metabolism for post-GDM women may be restored after receiving the multi-strain probiotics known as MCP BCMC strains for 12 weeks. These strains included *Lactobacillus acidophilus* BCMC 12130, *Lactobacillus casei subsp* BCMC 12313, *Lactobacillus lactis* BCMC 12451, *Bifidobacterium longum* BCMC 02120, *Bifidobacterium bifidum* BCMC 02290, and *Bifidobacterium infantis* BCMC 02129.

Findings also recorded a decrease in fasting blood glucose (FBG), waist circumference, total cholesterol, triglycerides (TG), and pro-inflammatory protein level

termed Interleukin-8 (IL-8). Plus, the high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) levels, associated with the risk of T2DM due to insulin sensitivity and cardiovascular disease (CVD) dropped by 25% from the baseline, potentially lowering the risk of GDM progressing to T2DM.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that only some probiotics work the same way, and a higher dosage does not necessarily mean better efficacy. It is also best to consult professional health specialists to know which probiotics are suitable for you.

Overall, it is important to understand that untreated GDM can develop into T2DM and know that a balanced lifestyle and probiotic supplementation can be beneficial to slow down the progression of the disease.

## PROBIOTICS THE RIGHT CHOICE IS THE BEST CHOICE



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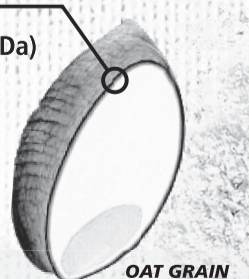
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References:  
1. EFSA Journal 2010; 8(12): 1885;  
2. Diets that are of low in GI and high in dietary fiber are protective – WHO Europe Diabetes

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## Adopting healthier habits before pregnancy

> FROM PAGE 2

be kept in check. Expectant mothers with the condition can ensure their blood sugar levels are within normal levels by eating healthy – it is recommended to eat more foods high in fibre, and low in fat and calories – and exercising moderately.

However, if the lifestyle changes don't sufficiently lower the blood sugar levels, there are treatments available as well. The medicine comes in the form of either an insulin injection, or a metformin tablet with their respective drawbacks – the tablet has side effects and the amount of insulin needed increases as the pregnancy progresses. In order to know what's best for a mother and her child, consult a healthcare professional for more advice.

Gestational diabetes goes away on its own after birth, but there are still risks associated with it. In the longer term, women with the condition are at a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes after their pregnancy.

Therefore, mothers post-delivery are advised to regularly check their blood sugar levels.

Additionally, mothers who have had GDM during their first pregnancy are at a higher risk of having it again in future pregnancies.

There is no solid prevention for gestational diabetes, but adopting healthier habits before pregnancy can help greatly. Such healthy habits include:

- A healthy high-fibre diet
- Regular exercise
- Maintaining a healthy weight before and during pregnancy

While gaining weight is normal in all pregnancies, gaining too much can put women at a greater risk for GDM. It's therefore important to keep an eye on any weight gain and consult the doctor if a woman feels that she is gaining more than what she feels is healthy.

If something seems amiss or patients are experiencing symptoms that they believe might indicate gestational diabetes, don't hesitate to consult an obstetrician for advice and guidance. Acting sooner instead of later may save a mother and her child a lot of problems in the long run.



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- Cholecystostomy complications
- Gallbladder stones and biliary stones

### Kidney Disease

- Kidney stone disease
- Kidney tumors
- Ureter obstruction
- Urinary obstruction and urinary leaks
- Prostate artery embolization

### Vascular (Vessel) Disease

- Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) (peripheral vascular disease)
- Pulmonary arterio-venous malformations (AVMs)
- Renal artery stenosis / secondary hypertension
- Varicose and spider veins
- Vascular malformations
- Venous occlusive disease
- Venous thrombosis (acute and chronic)

### Women's Health

- Infertility (fallopian tube recanalization)
- Uterine fibroids

### Liver Disease

- Biliary diseases, including biliary obstruction and leaks
- Cancer secondaries (metastasis) in liver
- Gallbladder stones and biliary stones
- Kidney and adrenal tumors
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