

# Large for Gestational Age Baby

Information and advice for mothers-to-be

## *Maternity*

### **What is a large for gestational age baby?**

A large for gestational age (LGA) baby is a baby who has an estimated weight that exceeds the usual weight expected for their gestation (number of weeks of pregnancy). In women who have diabetes that is not picked up or well-controlled the condition is called macrosomia.

Approximately 5 – 8 out of 100 babies are identified as being large for gestational age.

### **What causes a baby to be large for gestational age?**

We do not always know what has caused a baby to be LGA, but the following women are at increased risk of having a large baby:

- Women who have had a large baby before or have a family history of large babies.
- Women who are obese with a body mass index (BMI) of 35 or above.
- Women who are known to be diabetic or develop diabetes during pregnancy– high levels of sugar in the blood can pass through the placenta to your baby and affect growth.
- Baby boys are also more likely to be large for gestational age than baby girls.

However, many women who have a LGA baby do not have any of these risk factors.

### **How is large for gestational age diagnosed?**

Your midwife will measure your tummy, with a measuring tape, during your pregnancy to monitor the growth of your baby, and record this on the growth chart in your pregnancy records.

If your baby's size is above the 90th centile line on the growth chart you will be asked to have an ultrasound scan to check your baby's size. If the scan shows that your baby's size is above the 90th centile line then it is confirmed as a LGA baby.

There is no need to have further scans. This is because the ability of a scan to predict the correct weight of your baby is reduced as your baby grows and you get nearer to your due date. Scans can be as much as 10-15% inaccurate for predicting the weight so we do not gain more information from doing this. It is more helpful for your midwife to measure your tummy and for you to continue seeing her.

### **What happens if my baby is large for gestational age?**

If you are expecting a large for gestational age baby you will be offered a glucose tolerance test, if you have not already had one. This is a blood test which investigates your body's ability to cope with sugar during pregnancy. You will be given another leaflet about this test if you need it. If the test shows that you have gestational diabetes (diabetes in pregnancy) you will be contacted by a specialist midwife who will also support you through your pregnancy.

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If you have already had a glucose tolerance test, you will be seen by a specialist midwife who will show you how to monitor your blood sugar over a 7 day period. This will show how your blood sugar fluctuates before and after meals. She will also discuss a healthy diet with you and advise how you can manage your food and sugar intake.

After a week of monitoring she will see you again and discuss the results. If your results are in the normal range you will have a discussion about what that means and she will refer you back to your own community midwife.

You will be advised to wait for your labour to start naturally (unless your pregnancy continues beyond 41 weeks) and have a normal vaginal birth, as trying to deliver your baby early increases your risk of needing a caesarean section and other interventions.

### **What are the risks of having a large for gestational age baby?**

Most babies who are large for their gestational age are delivered normally without any problems; however there is an increase in the risk of:

- Shoulder dystocia (0.5% non-diabetic women) (where the baby is stuck during delivery of the head - the midwife will call for help if she suspects this)
- Perineal tear (the skin between the vagina and anus is torn and needs repair)
- Needing help delivering the baby

### **Is there anything I can do to reduce the risk of having a large for gestational age baby?**

Because it is difficult to predict which women will have a large baby there is little that can be done to reduce the risk. However eating a healthy diet and taking regular exercise can help to reduce the risk if you are overweight. Your midwife can give you advice about this and refer to a dietitian if needed.

### **Contact details**

**Maternity Triage**

0121 507 4181

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### References

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- Perinatal Institute, 'Audit of fundal height measurements plotted on customised growth charts', published in Midwifery Digest 2006

### Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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