

TESTING FOR GESTATIONAL DIABETES – ONE MOTHER'S STORY

There is so much research out there about testing in pregnancy but a big hole is that no one really investigates how all this testing and screening actually affects pregnant women, emotionally and physically.

This is my story and I know I am just one woman but trust me, these stories are out there and we need to listen.

My midwife discussed with me the risk factors that I had for gestational diabetes and suggested that instead of having the one-hour test that we went straight to the two-hour test and that we did this earlier than normal in my pregnancy. While I got all this I don't think she ever actually asked if I wanted to have it at all. We make assumptions all the time but during pregnancy this really needs to be avoided. However I decided that given my risk factors I would agree. It's funny how being pregnant can make you feel so vulnerable that even the strongest of people lose their voice. However I digress....

Blood tests were never fun for me anyway. I have deep thin veins and so often it's a struggle to find one to draw blood from. The record is four attempts to draw blood, numerous plasters and a number of bruisers. Well this was before my GDM test.

The day before the test I dutifully fasted even though snacking regularly was the only thing that really helped keep the morning sickness away. Needless to say by the time morning came I was ravenous, feeling a bit seedy and not at all looking forward to the test.

I managed to organise the kids and get them off to school. Often it is hard on women to juggle this hour or two of sitting at the lab with children so I was lucky that mine were both school aged.

When I arrived at the clinic they were busy and I had to wait. Never a nice time when you are already counting down the minutes to be done.

Finally my turn, yay! It didn't go too badly and after two attempts they managed to draw enough blood for the initial test. This didn't help the seedy feeling and so I was feeling a little green by the time I took my seat back in the waiting room with my drink.

I had been trying to eat quite healthy up to this point and so the sugar in the drink just added to my seedy feeling and I was feeling quite nauseous after getting it all down in the allotted time period. This was a lot more sugar than I would normally consume and I developed a headache.

A few pages of the old and tired magazines later and I was over it. Quick clock check and not even 30 minutes had past! The headache was worse, I was nauseous, bloated and was feeling quite low. Overall I wish I had declined it.

Due to a busy waiting room and how awful the drink had made me feel the lab people agreed that I could go lay down in my car. Sitting in the warm stuffy waiting room was making me worse so I squeezed myself into the back seat and lay down. This helped but not enough and I started watching the clock, waiting anxiously for the two hours to be up so I could have a small snack.

I started to feel worse after about an hour. My nauseous feeling got so bad I felt like I was going to vomit and so I got out of the car and went and sat outside in the fresh air. No one had warned me about this. They talk about what happens if you are diagnosed but ignore how the testing itself might actually make you feel and I felt even the lab test staff wasn't too worried. What's a little dizziness and headache when we want your blood?

Finally the two hours were up. I was hanging out to leave but unfortunately they struggled to find a vein. Seven attempts later it was a no go. I started crying at this point, all the dizziness, all that sugar was going to be for nothing. Thankfully they finally decided to do a finger prick to take some blood and assured me this would hopefully be enough. I have never been so relieved to see the back of a lab test.

Unfortunately due to a lab mix up my second blood test was mislabelled and couldn't be counted. I was not repeating the experience and so they just went off my results for the first fasting test which were enough to diagnose me with gestational diabetes.

Being diagnosed with gestational diabetes (GDM) changed my pregnancy but that is a whole other story!

The testing for GDM had such an impact that when I went for my post birth test I actually found myself having a small panic attack about the drink, the time and how I would feel.

We hear all the time about the benefits of testing but maybe we need to look for alternative methods and better risk assessment and maybe we need to start talking about the actual test and how you might feel.

To empower women to make an informed choice about GDM testing we need to be giving them the whole picture because in the end, informed choice is the gold standard and women shouldn't get any less.

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