

Gestational Diabetes Testing: One-Step vs. Two-Step

Between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy, every patient is tested for gestational diabetes (GDM) — high blood sugar that starts during pregnancy. There are two accepted ways to do this test. Both are considered safe and effective by national medical organizations. Your care team will tell you which one your practice uses.

TWO-STEP TEST <i>Screen first, confirm with a longer test</i>	ONE-STEP TEST <i>One longer test does it all</i>
• Step 1 – Screening: Drink a sugary liquid (50 g). No fasting needed. Blood is drawn 1 hour later. • If that value is high, you'll return for Step 2. • Step 2 – Diagnosis: Fast overnight, then drink a stronger sugary liquid (100 g). Blood is drawn 3 times over 3 hours. • Only about 15–20% of patients need Step 2. • Diagnosis: 2 or more of the 4 blood values are above the cutoff.	• One visit only: Fast overnight, then drink a sugary liquid (75 g). • Blood is drawn 3 times over 2 hours. No separate follow-up visit is needed. • Diagnosis: Just 1 of the 3 blood values above the cutoff is enough for a diagnosis. • Because fewer values are needed, this test identifies more patients with GDM than the two-step test.

At a Glance

	Two-Step	One-Step
Visits needed	1, or 2 if Step 1 is positive	1
Fasting required?	Only if you need Step 2	Yes, for everyone
Sugary drink dose	50 g, then 100 g if needed	75 g
Roughly how many patients are diagnosed with GDM	About 5–9 in 100	About 11–17 in 100

What does the research show? A large study of nearly 24,000 pregnant patients compared the two approaches directly. Even though the one-step test diagnosed about **twice as many** patients with GDM, babies born to each group had similarly healthy outcomes — similar rates of large birth weight, cesarean delivery, and pregnancy-related high blood pressure.

The bottom line for you: Neither test is "better" in every way — they simply trade off differently between the number of visits, fasting, and how many patients are identified. Both are endorsed by major professional organizations. Ask your care team which test your practice uses and what to expect at your appointment.