

Nurturing Birth Book Review: AIMS – Gestational Diabetes

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Book Review by Sara Healy

AIMS – Gestational Diabetes, by Deborah Hughes, is available from the AIMS shop as a printed book for £8 or on [Kindle](#), for £6.50: <https://www.aims.org.uk/shop>

I was so excited to be asked to review this book! Having been through gestational diabetes (GDM) three times, and currently diagnosed with it for a fourth time, I was extremely interested to read more information around the condition from a personal perspective. I also wanted to gauge whether this was a book I could confidently signpost to clients, having found so much conflicting advice and information in the past, even from reputable sources.

Overall, I found the book to be easily digestible, informative, and well explained; a good resource for those who know nothing about gestational diabetes and for those who are more knowledgeable but want somewhere to go for a summary. The length of the book makes it perfect to recommend to a client, especially those diagnosed in the last trimester if they feel like they don't have much time to make decisions.

The start of the book highlights how important informed and personal choice is, how everyone is different and that everyone will need to make decisions that work for themselves and their family based on their own personal circumstances. The book then continues to uphold this sentiment throughout by remaining factual and unbiased, citing relevant clinical studies, and highlighting key stats and figures.

This is key, because each Trust varies in how they treat gestational diabetes and at what point they offer treatment or recommend induction or other interventions. Having this book to refer to means that a pregnant woman or person can see all the guidelines clearly set out, together with the research behind them, and therefore make an informed decision at each stage of their gestational diabetes journey.

What this book doesn't do is give you a definitive answer on what you should or shouldn't do in the given circumstances. Nor could it do so, as is made clear throughout that a lot is still unknown and there is often scant or inconclusive research surrounding a lot of the risks and implications of gestational diabetes during pregnancy, birth and beyond. The trusts are intrinsically risk averse, and they therefore often recommend courses of action that err on the side of caution.

This can be hard for someone who just wants to know what is best for them and baby, and it's why I suspect many people end up just going along with what their Trust recommends because they might feel like the healthcare professionals know better. They may also feel pressured by their Trust, with coercive language being used, which can happen all too often.

But, with the transparency that this book provides and the information given within, I believe it will help pregnant women and people to make more informed decisions; decisions that they are comfortable with. For some it might settle some worries and put some statistics into perspective, but I also think for others it would highlight the potential seriousness of gestational diabetes more and lead them to reconsider their options.

I expect it might help those who are more risk averse to ultimately feel more comfortable adhering to Trust recommendations, while helping those who perceive risk differently to decide that the Trust's recommendations are not the best thing for them and their family. Importantly, I feel this book would help people of all opinions understand the research and the risks a bit better and come

to an informed decision of what to do for themselves rather than being pressured by someone else's judgement.

While the book is primarily fact focused and informative, I also loved that it gave insights into other people's gestational diabetes journeys, from those who accepted a more typical medicalised route to those who went the other way and decided to have a home birth. Although this doesn't present any answers either, it is helpful to hear from other people who have had similar experiences to you and to understand what they did and why. This gives a nice balance, adding a more personal touch and offering up perspectives that the author herself couldn't while she focused on providing factual, unbiased information.

From a personal perspective, this book is one I would expect to keep referring to, and I even have in my bag at the ready if I felt the need to get it out when talking to medical professionals as a pregnant person myself.

From a doula's perspective I would recommend that all doulas read this book. It is a quick read and one that will most definitely be a great addition to your doula library. Being diagnosed with something like gestational diabetes can be really isolating and worrying. When women and people are put under so much pressure to make decisions with only a basic knowledge, having a doula show understanding and empathy with you would feel incredibly uplifting, while the book is also a great source of information to help inform decisions.

Finally, I believe this book would go well alongside "The AIMS Guide to Induction of labour", as most people with gestational diabetes are likely to be offered induction or have induction discussed as a potential course of action at some point. I believe that to make an informed decision about whether or not to accept the hospital's offer of induction of labour due to gestational diabetes, an understanding of the process and pros and cons of induction in general is incredibly useful. AIMS also has a [Journal devoted to the topic of Induction](#).