EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

Regular exercise builds bones and muscles, give you energy, and keeps you healthy. It is just as important when you are pregnant. This pamphlet will explain:

- The benefits of being active
- How to start a healthy exercise program
- Exercises to avoid

**Don't overdo it!**

You should be able to carry on a normal conversation during physical activities. If you still feel tired after resting, give yourself a break for at least a day. Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- persistent contractions
- bleeding from the vagina
- increasing back pain, pubic pain, or pain in the abdomen
- sudden swelling of the ankles, hands or face
- dizziness or shortness of breath
  - excessive fatigue
  - difficulty walking
- changes in usual fetal movement
- swelling, pain, and redness in the calf of one leg

If you're already active, think about how you can modify or replace weight-bearing activities such as running, high-impact aerobics, hiking and tennis as your pregnancy progresses.

**Finally**

Exercise during pregnancy can help prepare you for labor and childbirth. Before you begin an exercise program, talk to your doctor. Follow this guide to help maintain a safe and healthy exercise program during pregnancy.

Adapted from *Exercise during pregnancy* (2003). American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 409 12th Street, SW, PO Box 96920, Washington, DC 20090-6920

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**Healthy Beginnings Project**

Keeping Active is Important!
Benefits of Exercise

Getting Started

Before starting a new exercise program, you should talk to your doctor. Ask about any specific sports or exercises that interest you.

Suitable activities include:

- Brisk walking
- Swimming
- Cycling—later in your pregnancy you may want to use a stationary or recumbent bike for better balance
- Low-Impact Aerobics or yoga—Low impact means no jumping, high kicks, leaps, fast running, and keeping one foot on the ground at all times to minimize stress on your joints
- Water Aerobics

Other exercises, if done in moderation, are safe for women who have done them for a while before pregnancy:

- Running
- Racquet sports
- Strength Training

Avoid the Following Activities:

- Downhill snow skiing
- Contact sports, such as ice hockey, soccer, and basketball or starting a new sport
- High-impact exercises

Exercise Safely

If it has been awhile since you’ve exercised, it is a good idea to start slowly. Begin with as little as 5 minutes of exercise each day and add 5 minutes each week until you can stay active for 30 minutes a day.

Always begin each exercise session with a warm-up period for 5-10 minutes. This is a light activity such as slow walking. After exercising cool down by slowly reducing your activity.

Wear suitable clothes, for example, a good support bra, loose clothing and supportive footwear. Take breaks for a drink, food or a rest if you need to. Avoid physical activity in extremely hot weather. After the first trimester of pregnancy, avoid doing any exercises on your back.

Adapted from: The Sensible Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy (2011), www.healthycanadians.ca/pregnancy Public Health Agency of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9