

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



Exercise during pregnancy can help prepare you for labor and childbirth.

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).
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Healthy Beginnings Project

*Keeping Active is
Important!*

Benefits of Exercise



Being physically active and exercising at least 30 min. on most, if not all, days of the week can help you:

- avoid putting on excess weight
- helps reduce backaches, constipation, bloating, and swelling
- strengthen your heart and lungs
- improve your mood and self-image
- reduce stress
- promote sleep
- increase your muscle tone, strength, and endurance,
- give you the extra energy and strength needed for the birth
- and speed up your recovery after labor and delivery
- may help prevent or treat gestational diabetes

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.