

Exercise

You're tired. You're gaining weight. Exercise may be the last thing you want to do. But exercise can boost your energy level and provide many other benefits such as:

- ❖ Reduces backaches, constipation, bloating and swelling
- ❖ Improves your mood
- ❖ Improve your posture
- ❖ Promotes muscle tone, strength and endurance
- ❖ Helps you sleep better
- ❖ Makes it easier for you to get back in shape after the baby is born
- ❖ Improve your ability to cope with labor and delivery



What changes occur in the body during pregnancy that can affect my exercise routine?

- ❖ The *hormones* produced during pregnancy cause the *ligaments* that support your joints to become relaxed.
- ❖ This makes the *joints* more mobile and more at risk of *injury*.
- ❖ The extra weight in the front of your body during pregnancy *shifts your center of gravity* and places *stress* on joints and muscles, especially those in the pelvis and lower back.
- ❖ This can make you less stable, cause back pain, and make you more likely to lose your *balance* and fall, especially in later pregnancy.
- ❖ The extra weight you are carrying will make your body work harder than before you were pregnant.

Getting Started

Before you start your exercise program, make sure you do not have any health conditions that may limit your activity.

Women with the following conditions may be advised not to exercise during pregnancy:

- Some forms of heart and lung disease
- Cervical problems
- Multiple pregnancy (two or more fetuses) at risk for preterm labor
- Vaginal bleeding
- Preterm labor during the current pregnancy
- Preeclampsia or high blood pressure caused by pregnancy

Important:

if you are sweating so is your baby

if your heart rate is high, so is your baby's

Whether you're a seasoned athlete or a beginner, watch for the following **warning signs during exercise**. If you have any of them, *stop exercising*.

- Dizziness or faintness
- Increased shortness of breath
- Uneven or rapid heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Vaginal bleeding
- Uterine contractions that continue after rest

Exercise for Beginners

If you've never exercised before, you need to start slowly.

If you have not been active, begin with as little as 5 minutes of exercise a day and add 5 minutes each week until you can stay active for 30 minutes per day.

The following activities are great choices for beginners:

- ❖ **Walking**: Brisk walking provides a total body workout and is easy on the joints and muscles. If you were not active before getting pregnant, walking is a great way to start an exercise program.
- ❖ **Swimming**: Swimming works many of the body's muscles. The water supports your weight, so you avoid injury and muscle strain. It also helps you stay cool and prevents your legs from swelling.
- ❖ **Cycling**: This activity provides a good aerobic workout. However, your growing

belly can affect your balance and make you more prone to falls. You may want to stick with stationary or recumbent biking later in pregnancy.

- ❖ **(Low Impact) Aerobics**: Aerobic exercise keeps your heart and lungs strong. Low-impact and water aerobics are good exercise, and there are some aerobics classes designed just for pregnant women. However, if you have certain conditions, including heart disease, preeclampsia or preterm labor, you should avoid aerobic exercise. Talk to your health care provider if you are unsure.
- ❖ **Hiking**
- ❖ **Yoga**

WE DO NOT RECOMMEND:

- **Horseback riding,**
- **Downhill skiing,**
- **Rock climbing or**
- **Scuba Diving**

Continuing Your Routine

Many women maintain a high level of activity during pregnancy, but there are a few things you need to remember while continuing an exercise program during this time. First, *avoid new sports* or any exercise or sport that could *injure your abdomen*.

- Playing soccer or softball, for instance, puts you at risk of getting hit in the abdomen with a ball at high speed.
- Contact sports are also off limits.

The following exercises are safe for women who have done them for a while before pregnancy:

- **Running**: If you were a runner before you became pregnant, you can probably keep running during pregnancy, though you may have to modify your routine.
- **Racquet Sports**: In some racquet sports, such as badminton, tennis and racquetball, your changing balance may affect rapid movements, which can increase your risk of falling. You may want to avoid some racquet sports.
- **Strength Training**: Strength training will make your muscles stronger and may help prevent some of the aches and pains common in pregnancy.

Whatever exercise regimen you choose, be sure to discuss your exercise plan at your OB visit to be sure you are making a good decision for you and your baby.

Safety Tips: Drink plenty of water

Although getting regular exercise is important, it's just as important to protect yourself from injury.

- ❖ Make sure you have all the equipment you need for a safe workout.
- ❖ Wear shoes with plenty of padding and support
- ❖ choose a well-fitting, supportive sports bra.

Follow these tips for safe exercise:

- **Drink** enough fluids. Take a bottle of water with you to drink before, during and after your workout.
- If you're *getting hot or feeling thirsty*, **take a break and drink more water.**
- Begin your workout by **stretching and warming up** for 5 minutes to prevent muscle strain.
- Walking slowly or riding a stationary bike are good warm-ups.
- Work out on a wooden floor or a tightly carpeted surface. This gives you **better footing**.
- Don't do jerky, bouncy or **high-impact motions**.
- Jumping, jarring motions or quick direction changes can **strain your joints and cause pain**.
- **Get up slowly** after lying or sitting on the floor. This will help keep you from feeling dizzy or faint. Once you're standing, briefly walk in place.
- Keep track of **intensity**. Extra weight makes your body work harder than it did before you were pregnant, even if you are working out at a slower pace. Intense exercise boosts oxygen and blood flow to the muscles and away from other parts of your body, such as your uterus. If you can't talk at a normal level during exercise, then you are working too hard.
- Don't do **deep knee bends, full sit-ups, double leg lifts** (raising and lowering both legs at once) or **straight-leg toe touches**.
- After the first trimester, you should avoid exercises that involve lying flat on your back. This can reduce blood flow to your baby.
- Watch your **balance**.
Remember, the weight you gain in the front of your body shifts your center of gravity, putting stress on your joints and muscles in the lower back and pelvis. It also can make you less stable and more likely to fall.
- Following intense exercise, **cool down** for 5 to 10 minutes. Slow your pace little by little, and end your workout with gentle stretching.
- **Don't stretch too far**, though. Intense stretching can injure the tissue that connects your joints.