

## Exercise & Pregnancy

Exercise is recommended for women of all ages during every stage of life to improve health. Many women regularly exercise and want to continue during pregnancy. Some women decide they want to start exercising once they become pregnant. Exercise is generally safe for most pregnant women, but you must get your health care provider's approval before beginning any new exercise program.

Exercise has many benefits. It will help to increase your energy & lift your spirits. Exercise will improve many common discomforts of pregnancy such as leg cramps, bloating, swelling, and constipation. Some exercises will improve your posture & muscle tone. If you have gestational diabetes, exercise may help you to control this and minimize complications. You will also be more relaxed and sleep better. Women who exercise regularly before and during pregnancy often have fewer complications during pregnancy and delivery.

Try to find a variety of exercises that you enjoy and can continue during your pregnancy. Walking, swimming, cycling, and other aerobic exercises are all good. Remember to think of other exercises that you can do when the weather is too hot or too cold.

If you have the approval of your health care provider, exercise should not harm you or your baby. Remember the following tips when exercising:

- It's best to exercise regularly, at least three to five times per week.
- Make sure you drink plenty of liquids, especially water, before, during, and after exercising.
- Wear clothes that are comfortable and loose-fitting. Supportive undergarments may also be worn as long as they are not too restricting.
- Don't exercise in bad weather, including hot, humid, cold, or icy days.
- After your first trimester (the first three months of pregnancy) you should not exercise while lying on your back. The change in your blood circulation may cause decreased blood flow which could harm the baby if done for a prolonged time.
- **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY!!** If you feel tired, stop exercising immediately and rest. Pregnancy is not the time to push yourself with exercise. During pregnancy your body has to work harder than it did before pregnancy. One way to be sure your workout is not too intense is to monitor your heart rate. You should be able to talk at a normal level without shortness of breath while exercising. If you can't do this, then you are working too hard.
- Avoid any new, unfamiliar exercises. As your belly grows in size you may find it harder to keep your balance and you may feel more awkward doing your routine activities.
- Your joints loosen during pregnancy to prepare for the baby's delivery. Be careful not to put too much stress on your joints (knees, elbows, ankles, and hips) so that you don't injure yourself. Swimming and stationary cycling are easier on the joints.
- Be sure to eat at least 300 extra calories a day if you are exercising during pregnancy. A small sandwich or a cup of fruit yogurt with crackers is about 300 calories.

## **Exercise & Pregnancy (Cont'd)**

Most forms of low-impact exercise are safe during pregnancy if done with caution and if not done excessively. If you experience any of the warning signs below, you should stop exercising immediately and call your provider if the symptoms continue:

- Pain in the chest, abdominal area, hips, or pubic area
- Uterine contractions that continue after rest
- Calf pain, calf swelling or trouble walking
- Dizziness, faintness or persistent headache
- Increased shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Vaginal bleeding
- Uneven or rapid heartbeat
- Fluid leaking or gushing from the vagina