

PRENATAL EXERCISING



BASIC INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Exercising during pregnancy can help reduce some of the discomfort that occurs with pregnancy. It can improve posture and make the body more supple. It helps blood circulation. It provides a feeling of general well being. Pregnancy is a state of health, not of illness. Properly done exercises can help maintain health and avoid problems. A well-conditioned body will perform better during the stress of advanced pregnancy, labor, and delivery. Being fit will lead to a more speedy recovery of body weight after delivery.
- Do exercises on a routine basis, rather than once in a while. Plan your exercise program with the help of your prenatal medical team. It should be based on your fitness level before pregnancy. Women who have routinely done an exercise program before pregnancy can continue it during pregnancy. Sometimes a few changes are needed. Women who were not exercising before pregnancy are advised to begin an exercise program slowly.
- Limits to your exercise program will depend on your state of health, if you have had any problems with prior pregnancies, what types of exercise activities you plan, and your dietary needs.

NORMAL CHANGES DURING PREGNANCY

- The pregnant woman's center of gravity moves forward and downward. This alters balance, stability, and alignment (standing tall and straight). Backache, a frequent complaint of pregnancy, is mainly due to poor posture.
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy soften ligaments and connective tissue. This can affect the stability and support of the spine and torso.
- The abdominal muscles are stressed by the weight of the enlarging uterus. Keeping the pelvis in proper position protects these muscles from undue stretching and possible separation.
- Proper posture and alignment will assist with better lung function, which can become limited by the enlarging uterus.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN AN EXERCISE PROGRAM

- A warm-up period that slowly stretches muscles to the limit of range of motion is achieved, and blood circulation to muscles and heart rate are gradually increased.
- Twenty to thirty minutes is considered a minimum time for the exercises to be effective.
- After exercising, there should be a cool-down period for muscles and heart rate to return to their pre-exercise state.

- Exercises should focus on control, rhythm, stabilization of the pelvis, and proper alignment of the pelvis.
- Swimming provides rhythm, controlled breathing, and water buoyancy. In the late second trimester and in the third trimester, pool exercise is well tolerated. Wear a good supportive bathing suit.
- Drink plenty of fluids before and after you exercise.

CAUTIONS

- Do not take part in a strenuous exercise program (such as a marathon) when pregnant, if you were not doing it regularly before pregnancy.
- Avoid sudden or forceful movements that will severely stress ligaments and joints that are already relaxed under hormonal influence.
- Contact sports or extreme sports should be avoided.
- Do not perform any exercises that put pressure on the lower back, curve of the spine, or cause excess compression of the uterus.
- Don't exercise outdoors in hot, humid weather.
- Don't bend too deeply or stand up abruptly.
- Stop any exercise right away if you develop signs of dizziness, bleeding, faintness, abdominal or back pain, overly rapid heart rate, or shortness of breath. If symptoms continue, call our office.
- Discuss your exercise program with your obstetric care provider to be sure that there are no factors that may cause problems. This is very important if you have any chronic medical disorder, or if the pregnancy is considered high-risk.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member is pregnant and has questions or concerns about exercising.
- During pregnancy, you want to start a new exercise program or change an existing routine.
- You experience vaginal bleeding or spotting, abdominal cramping, absence of fetal movement or prolonged contractions, light-headedness or dizziness, serious headache, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, fast resting heart rate, or chest pain.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page