

Exercise & Pregnancy

Combining regular exercise with pregnancy can provide many benefits to both you and baby! As a healthy woman with a normal pregnancy, you may continue your regular exercise regimen, or begin a new exercise program. Please note: Don't hesitate to contact your doctor if you feel uncomfortable or have any additional unexplained pains or symptoms during exercise or at any other time.

Not only has participation in regular physical activity been shown to improve maternal fitness, prevent excess weight gain, and provide for a speedy postpartum recovery, but the psychological benefits are undeniable!

Other ways you can benefit from a standard exercise routine...

- Increased energy level, or prevent energy levels from decreasing
- Improved mood
- Sleep better at night
- Improved muscle and bone strength
- Help your body prepare for childbirth
- Maintain better posture and reduce back pain
- Reduce risk of having gestational diabetes
- Have a faster and easier recovery process after having your baby



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Even if you are not currently exercising regularly, or have never participated in an exercise program, walking can be a simple and effective way to stay active. Learn more about the benefits and find resources at www.letsgowalkinms.com.

First Trimester

It is important to remember that although your body is not changing much during this stage, major physiological changes are taking place. Keep in mind.....

- Although your blood pressure and heart rate are not a lot different from those in non-pregnant women, you may fatigue much earlier when exercising.
- You'll want to avoid large increases in your body temperature during exercise, wear loose clothing and exercise in a cool environment.
- Your weight gain is usually small during this period, typically zero to 10 pounds.
- A proper balance of nutrition, hydration, regular exercise, and rest are of utmost importance!

Second & Third Trimester

During your second and third trimester you will probably experience more noticeable changes in your body. To keep working toward a healthy pregnancy, remember...

- Normal weight gain ranges between 22 and 35 pounds, centered largely around the abdomen and pelvis.
- Your posture and center of gravity will likely be altered due to your weight gain.
- Exercises requiring balance and agility may become more difficult due to the change in weight distribution.
- If you are a normal weight before pregnancy, you need only an average of 300 extra calories per day during pregnancy.

Talk with your doctor before you begin any exercise program

Myth

Fact



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If you have never exercised or been active before your pregnancy, then you should not begin exercising during your pregnancy.

As long as your doctor does not advise you to rest or stay off your feet due to risk factors during your pregnancy, it is perfectly safe to begin a workout routine. That does not mean you should start training for a marathon. But even starting off walking 10 – 20 minutes a day can greatly benefit you and your baby. To make sure you are performing a safe beginner workout program during your pregnancy, consult with your doctor or a fitness specialist.

Never let your heart rate get above 140 beats per minute.

Each individual's heart rate varies greatly, especially while exercising. There is no set heart rate pregnant women should have while exercising. Simply paying attention to how you feel while exercising is the best way to determine if you need to slow down. If you start feeling out of breath and begin feeling dizzy or faint, you are pushing yourself too hard. Slow down, catch your breath, and try to continue exercising at a lower level. Again, consult with your doctor regarding a target heart rate for you.

It is not safe to lie on your back during pregnancy.

During the first trimester, it is generally safe to lie on your back for your workout. During the second and third trimesters, you should avoid performing exercises on your back as this decreases blood flow to your womb. As long as you are comfortable, you can continue performing core strengthening exercises, such as pelvic tilts, either on your hands and knees or by standing against a wall.

Too much exercise will pull nutrients away from your baby, causing him/her to not develop properly.

As long as you adjust your caloric needs appropriately, your baby is going to get all the nutrients he/she needs. Sometimes eating smaller meals frequently throughout the day will help to keep your blood sugar levels regulated.

It is not safe to do any weight lifting while pregnant.

Not only is this safe, but it is highly recommended. Strengthening your muscles and bones can make the labor process easier on you. Also, like cardio, strengthening will help your body bounce back after having the baby much faster. Consult a fitness specialist for a specialized pregnancy workout as you do want to limit lifting weights above the head and exercises that would put a strain on the lower back.

Safety Tips

While exercise during pregnancy is very beneficial for you and your baby, there are some important safety tips you should follow:

- When it is exceptionally hot and humid, avoid doing any brisk exercise outside. Try to get your workout inside at a local gym or at home. If you do go outside, keep your workout to a slow walk, and be careful not to push yourself too hard in order to avoid overheating.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Making sure you get plenty of fluids will help prevent you from overheating and dehydrating.
- During pregnancy, hormones will relax your joints, causing you to be more prone to injury. Be mindful of this when participating in aerobics classes that consist of jumping around and jerky movements. This does not mean you cannot participate in these classes. It only means to be careful and ask the class instructor for modifications if needed.
- Wear comfortable clothing while working out. Keep in mind the climate you are going to be exercising in and dress accordingly; make sure you wear a bra that gives you plenty of support.

Ask your doctor if there are certain activities you should avoid during pregnancy. Remember, always listen to your body and pay attention to how you feel while performing your workout routine.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi's Wellness Center Discount Program offers membership discounts at select wellness centers around the state. Just visit our website at www.bcbsms.com and click on the Wellness Center Discount Program link in the "Be Healthy" section.

All material adapted from The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and The American College of Sports Medicine.



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