

TEACHER INFORMATION

EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

Exercise during pregnancy is very beneficial, important, and if done correctly, is very safe. It reduces fatigue and helps manage stress. By increasing endurance and strengthening muscles, exercise also helps prepare for the strain of labor. Women who exercise while pregnant seem to recover faster after the baby is born. But caution must be exercised as your body is at a higher risk for injury during pregnancy. Correct posture during exercise is essential in preventing injury.



One of the best exercises during pregnancy is walking. All that is needed are comfortable walking shoes and a place to walk. Twenty minutes of walking a day can lift your spirits and strengthen your body. Swimming, low-impact aerobics, and yoga are also good exercises during pregnancy.

If you already exercise regularly, review your activities. As your pregnancy develops, you may need to slow down or change some of your exercise routines, especially if you feel awkward or lose your balance easily. A good rule is avoid overheating or getting out of breath.

A variety of changes occur to a woman's body when pregnant. Regular exercise can benefit those changes.

WHY EXERCISE

1. To help prepare your body for the stress of labor and delivery.
 - a. To gain flexibility and strengthen muscles used during childbirth.
Normal hormone changes cause ligaments and joints to relax. This increases the chance of sprains. Strength and flexibility decrease the risk of straining a muscle or joint.
 - b. To improve stamina.
2. To help relieve back pain.
3. To improve posture.
4. Improves balance
 - a. As the uterus grows bigger, the body's center of gravity changes, making it easier for the pregnant woman to lose her balance. Exercise helps the individual easily adapt to her changing shape
5. To help your body more efficiently carry the load during pregnancy.
6. To improve circulation.
7. Lowers blood pressure and resting heart rate
 - a. Aerobic exercise – like walking or biking -conditions the heart and lungs. Pregnancy can affect breathing. Expect to feel out of breath sooner than you normally would. If you can talk while you exercise, you are probably exercising at the right level. If you get out of breath, cut back. Lung fitness is improved with aerobic exercise.
 - b. Because of the extra effort your heart makes during pregnancy, it beats faster. Even moderate exercise can make your heart stronger. During exercise, keep your heart rate lower than 140 beats per minute
8. Improve self image.
9. Regain figure faster.

- ✓ Before starting any exercise program, check with your healthcare provider first. Certain medical problems do not allow exercise during pregnancy. Remember, exercise for good health, fitness, and fun.
- ✓ Don't begin a new sport or aerobic type exercise for the first time if pregnant.
- ✓ Don't go over 8000 ft above sea level and over exert in last 3 months because oxygen supply will be cut/down to the fetus.

EXERCISE TO DO EVERY DAY

A. Stretches for lower back

1. Gently pull knee towards chest – hold leg behind thigh, NOT on top of your knee. (point knee towards ear)
2. Gently pull both knees towards chest – holding legs behind thighs. HOLD for 15 seconds.

B. Upper back stretch

1. Sit with soles of feet together, but about 15” away from pelvis.
2. Pull in abdominal muscles, rounding your back.
3. Gently tuck chin to chest, stretching upper back, HOLD 15 seconds.

C. Pelvic Tilts

1. Laying down, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Tilt pelvis back to flatten the “hollow” in low back.
2. On all four – “cat-back” raises,
3. Standing – bend knees.

D. Kegels

1. Tighten pelvic floor muscles – hold 3-5 seconds. 50/day (think of pulling the muscles “up” & “in” & gently release)
2. Elevator
 - a. Gradually tighten pelvic floor muscles – going from the “first floor” to the “fourth floor”.