

# Exercise in Pregnancy



## Is it safe for me to exercise while I'm pregnant?

Most exercise is safe for pregnant women. In fact, daily exercise during your pregnancy can help you and your baby be healthier and might decrease your chance of having some problems during pregnancy. If you had a medical problem before you became pregnant or have had complications during your pregnancy, you should talk about the safety of exercise with your health care provider before you start any activity.

## How can exercising while I'm pregnant help me?

Exercise in pregnancy can help you in many ways. It can help you feel better and have less back pain, constipation, and tiredness. Exercise can also help you sleep better and improve your mood. Your body will be better prepared for labor. You may have a shorter labor with less chance of having a cesarean birth. You will gain less weight in pregnancy, which will help you get back to your prepregnancy weight more quickly after the baby comes. Exercise in pregnancy may also lower your chance of getting gestational diabetes or high blood pressure during pregnancy. Your baby is more likely to be born with a healthy birth weight. Exercise can also lower the chance of having postpartum depression.

## How much exercise should I do while I'm pregnant?

You should try to do moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Moderate exercise means you should start to sweat and your heart rate increases a bit, but you are still able to talk while you are exercising. If you exercised before pregnancy, you can probably continue the same physical activities. If you are not currently exercising, pregnancy is a good time to start. You want to start slow and gradually increase your exercise.

## What exercises are safe for me to do while I'm pregnant?

Walking is a good exercise to start with. You will get moving and have less strain on your joints. Swimming, biking, yoga, and low-impact aerobics are also good choices. Light weight training is okay too. Being creative with your exercise will help you stay motivated. Hiking, dancing, and rowing can be fun activities to try. You do not need to pay money for an exercise class or activity. Walking up and down stairs or doing exercises at home are all good, free activities.

## Are there other things I should consider when I'm exercising while I'm pregnant?

Be sure to stretch your muscles first and warm up and cool down each time you exercise. Drink water throughout your exercise so you can stay well hydrated. Make sure you do not get too hot, and do not overdo your exercise, especially on a hot day. During pregnancy, your balance changes as the baby grows, so it is important to move carefully and always make sure you are not in danger of falling. Avoid lying flat on your back. You can put a pillow or towel underneath one hip so that you can still participate in exercises that may require this position. Listen to your body for warning signs. See the following list for specific warning signs that tell you to stop your exercise.

## What exercises are not recommended while I'm pregnant?

You should not do exercises that put you at risk for getting hit or kicked in the stomach or falling. Do not do exercises that involve contact with other persons or heavy lifting. Exercises to avoid are:

- Hockey
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Skiing
- Gymnastics
- Horseback riding



- High-intensity racquet sports
- Heavy weight lifting (over 50 pounds)
- Scuba diving
- Exercise at high altitudes

Use common sense. If you are not sure about an exercise, you should talk to your health care provider first.

### **Are there reasons I should not exercise while I'm pregnant?**

You should talk to your health care provider before you exercise if you:

- Have a serious heart or lung disease
- Have high blood pressure before or during pregnancy
- Have premature labor or have had a threatened miscarriage during this pregnancy
- Have cervical incompetence (weakness) or have a cerclage in place
- Have placenta previa (your placenta is low or covering the opening to your cervix)
- Are carrying more than one baby
- Have had or are currently having any vaginal bleeding
- Think your membranes are ruptured (water is broken)

### **When should I stop my exercise?**

Stop exercising if you:

- Have bleeding or are leaking fluid from your vagina
- Have trouble breathing
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Have pain in your chest
- Have pain or swelling in your calf
- Have contractions before you are 37 weeks pregnant
- Are feeling the baby move less than normal

#### **For More Information**

##### **Kid's Health**

General information on exercise in pregnancy.

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_center/staying\\_fit/exercising\\_pregnancy.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/staying_fit/exercising_pregnancy.html#)

<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/pregnancy.html>

##### **March of Dimes**

Video and written information on exercise in pregnancy.

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/exercise-during-pregnancy.aspx#>

##### **Mayo Clinic**

Exercises you can do at home that strengthen your muscles and get your body ready for labor.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/pregnancy-week-by-week/multimedia/pregnancy-exercises/sls-20076779?s=1>

##### **Parents Magazine**

Low-impact yoga exercises you can do at home to prepare for labor and stay healthy.

<http://www.parents.com/pregnancy/my-body/fitness/prenatal-yoga-workout/#page=18>

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