

## EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

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Before starting any exercise program, discuss it with your doctor to find a program appropriate for you. If you are having problems with your pregnancy, it is generally best to avoid strenuous exercise. A baby that already has problems with getting enough oxygen may not tolerate even light exercise. You should not exercise to lose weight while you are pregnant. Regular exercise during pregnancy will help a woman be prepared for the physical challenges of childbirth. Benefits include strengthening the muscles to help with childbirth, reducing common backaches, alleviating constipation, improving posture, elevating mood, and promoting better sleep. You will get the most benefit if you start exercising before pregnancy. Commonly, women will start exercising during the last trimester, which is a difficult time due to enlargement of the uterus and breasts and a shift in the center of gravity. If you have not been exercising regularly up until this point, even light exercise may decrease the oxygen delivered to your baby. In addition to your heart, the three muscle groups you should concentrate on during pregnancy are the muscles of your back, pelvis, and abdomen.

### ■ ■ ■ General Guidelines

The level of exercise you can do depends on your health and activity level before pregnancy. If you were sedentary before pregnancy, walking is a good way to begin. Because your

center of gravity changes, exercise caution with sports that may affect your balance or that require rapid movements. Always make sure to drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, which may decrease blood flow to your baby. Sports such as skiing and surfing and contact sports can be dangerous due to potential trauma to the abdomen. High-altitude activities can deprive you and your baby of oxygen; this may cause premature labor. Talk with your doctor.

Warming up and cooling down are very important. Start slowly and build up to more demanding exercises. Toward the end of an exercise session, gradually slow your activity. Try working back through the exercises in reverse order. Check your pulse during peak activity. Slow down your activity if your heart starts beating faster than the target range recommended by your health care provider. Don't exceed a heart rate of 140 beats per minute. Exercise that is too strenuous may speed up the baby's heartbeat to a dangerous level. In general, if you are able to carry on a conversation comfortably while exercising, your heart rate is probably within the recommended limits. Check to make sure.

You should stop exercising and call your health care provider if you have any unusual symptoms, such as pain, uterine contractions, chest pain, bleeding or fluid leakage from the vagina, dizziness, or shortness of breath. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions.

Notes:

(Up to 4400 characters only)

Notes and suggestions