

Pregnancy and Exercise: What You Can Do for a Healthy Pregnancy

Is it safe for me to exercise during pregnancy?

It's probably safe, but you should check with your doctor first. Although some questions have been asked about the effects of exercise on pregnant women, there is no proof that gentle exercise has any bad effects on pregnancy. Studies haven't shown any benefits for the baby, but gentle exercise might help you feel better and maintain your weight. If you have no serious medical problems and you have an uncomplicated pregnancy, it's probably safe for you to do some exercising.

How should I start an exercise program?

It's best to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. You may have a medical condition that would make exercise harmful to you or your baby. If your doctor approves, you can start exercising at a level that does not cause pain, shortness of breath or excessive tiredness. You may then slowly increase your activity. If you feel uncomfortable, short of breath or very tired, you should reduce your exercise level. If you have already been exercising, it's easier to keep exercising during pregnancy. If you haven't exercised before, you need to start very slowly. Many women find that they need to slow down their level of exercise during pregnancy.

What types of exercise are best when I'm pregnant?

The most comfortable exercises are those that don't require your body to bear extra weight. Swimming and stationary cycling can be continued throughout pregnancy. Walking and low-impact aerobics are usually well-tolerated. You and your doctor will need to decide what's best for you and your baby.

What should I be careful about?

Be careful to avoid activities that increase your risk of falls or injury, such as contact sports or vigorous sports. Even mild injuries to the "tummy" area can be serious when you're pregnant. After the first 3 months of pregnancy, it's best to avoid exercising while lying on your back, since the weight of the baby may interfere with blood circulation. Also avoid long periods of standing.

When the weather is hot, exercise in the early morning or late evening to help you avoid getting overheated. If you're exercising indoors, make sure the room has enough ventilation. Consider using a fan to help keep yourself cool. Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty.

Make sure that you're eating a well-balanced diet. Normally, pregnancy increases your food requirements by 300 calories a day, even without exercise.

What problems should I tell my doctor about?

Blood or fluid coming from your vagina Sudden or severe abdominal or vaginal pain
Contractions that go on for 30 minutes after you stop exercising Chest pain Shortness of

breath Headache that is severe or won't go away Dizziness Dim or blurry vision

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