

PRE-PREGNANCY

Planning for a baby is no small thing! And it is one of the best times to take care of yourself. From planning your pregnancy, through the two-week-wait, we have you covered!

According to a recent study on the fertility of regular exercisers, exercise will not interfere with fertility, unless it is interfering with normal ovulation. And as long as exercise does not induce stress, you can continue normal activity and exercise during the two-week-wait (the time between conception and a positive pregnancy test).

To make sure you are in the best pre-pregnancy state:

- Stay well-nourished and hydrated.
- Exercise in a cool area. Also note, this is probably not the best time to try that new High Intensity Interval workout.
- Evaluate any vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain, infrequent periods, cramping, stomach issues or injury with your Ob-Gyn or healthcare provider.

PREGNANCY

Now that you're pregnant, you need to treat yourself well. However, there is a big difference between treating yourself well and spoiling yourself. 😊

Questions you might be asking yourself are "how will my belly ever return to its pre-pregnancy self?" and "what exercise is safe during pregnancy?" To answer the latter, we will be discussing safe prenatal exercises and safe prenatal nutrition. And as you watch your growing belly it's important that you know your body is remarkably adaptable. Your recovery to your pre-pregnancy self will happen, especially if you incorporate exercise both during pregnancy and after pregnancy.

Keep in mind you must see your OB before beginning any exercise routine. And any recommendations by your OB supersede the general rules found in this packet. Note, all information is based on singleton pregnancies.

PREGNANCY EXERCISE

EXERCISING IN THE FIRST TRIMESTER

Exercise during the first trimester tends to be challenging. The volume of blood pumped out by the heart each minute increases by 5-6 weeks gestation and blood pressure is decreased. All of these changes, while unnoticeable on the outside can create feelings of dizziness, rapid heart rate and the feeling of not being able to take a deep breath.

If you work out regularly these symptoms might be what triggers you to take a pregnancy test.

While all of this is going on you might notice you are low on energy, green to the gills, tired and simply blah. This combination makes exercise during the first trimester challenging. But even 10-15 minutes of an exercise routine can change the course of your symptoms, if only temporarily relieving nausea. Surprisingly, you will probably feel more energized from working out than if you skip it. But if your fatigue is serious enough that you just can't drag yourself through the routine, don't do it.

Exercise also helps swelling, varicose veins, back pain, etc. And provides numerous benefits to the baby.

In the First Trimester, the most common concern amongst pregnant women is whether exercising will induce a miscarriage. Exercise actually soothes many of the aches and annoyances of the first trimester, and continuing to exercise throughout the pregnancy can only add benefits to the mother and her baby.

EXERCISING IN THE SECOND TRIMESTER

You will probably feel better than you did in your first trimester. And you will start seeing more of your baby bump! Try to be more consistent in your workout routine and refrain from lying on your back for long periods of time, as well as motionless exercises.

Partway through the second trimester your blood volume is up 30-40% above pre-pregnancy levels. It then plateaus for the remainder.

So, what does this mean?

More blood = More oxygen to the muscles = More endurance. Does that mean go run a marathon? No, but it does mean during the second trimester you might be able to jump/walk/jog more. Although you should never get to the point of exhaustion or fatigue.

EXERCISING IN THE THIRD TRIMESTER

Relaxin, the hormone that let's your pelvis and rib cage expand to fit your baby, has also created loose joint stability. This creates more flexibility, but it also creates an environment for injury if you are not careful. All the postural changes are probably altering your sense of balance. You tend to "waddle" as

you walk. This is because your gait (the way you move) is changing to adapt to the extra 15-35 lbs.

But even with all of these changes – if you work out regularly – you do not need to decrease intensity during the third trimester.

Keep in mind what was easy in your second trimester might not be in your third trimester. And you probably no longer need heavy weight to do lower body exercises, since you are carrying your own “weight” in your belly!

It’s important that you understand that your body will tell you when you need a break—both during the workout itself and those days when you just don’t have the energy to work out. Listen to your Body...it is super smart... it bears a child!

FOLLOW THESE ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES ACCORDING TO YOUR LEVEL OF EXERCISE.

BEGINNER – Start with 15 minute workouts 3x/week. Research recommends gradually increasing this to 30 minutes, 4x/week. The best type of exercise is walking or swimming. Your Ob-Gyn might recommend strength training as well.

SOMEWHAT ACTIVE – When you are somewhat active (participating in exercise and activities a few times a week) 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity aerobic activity is encouraged. 20-30 minutes on most days is a good goal. In addition to aerobic activity, strength training should be done every other day.

ADVANCED OR “RECREATIONAL ATHLETE” – When you habitually engage in exercise, you can and should continue your regimen, adjusted over time. Any session over 45 minutes can lead to low blood sugar, so limiting the exercise session or ingesting adequate caloric intake prior to exercise is important.

You can continue exercise such as running as long as you and your OB discuss and maintain a healthy pregnancy.

[Click for more on running during pregnancy.](#)

SIDE NOTE:

Total Blood Volume in regularly exercising pregnant women is 10-15% higher than in women who do not exercise. And the benefits of cardio (aerobic exercise) are still present 6-12 months after birth. Which is why some athletes have improved performance after birth

PREGNANCY EXERCISE DO'S

Overall pregnant women have the same exercise guidelines as non-pregnant women – aim for 20-30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week. But there are several anatomical changes that require strengthening & lengthening of different muscle groups. You will find these in our pregnancy programs.

According to ACOG, women with uncomplicated pregnancies should be encouraged to engage in aerobic and strength-conditioning exercises before, during and after pregnancy (ACOG CO650, Dec 2015). Competitive events, contact sports, activities with a high risk of falling, scuba diving and Hot Yoga/Pilates should all be avoided.

It is important you exercise in a cool environment and monitor your intensity.

The “intensity” of a prenatal fitness plan is going to depend on a number of factors, including your prior experience with exercise, your health history, the status of the pregnancy, and your own personal tolerance for exertion. Chat with your OB before deciding what is best for you.

Stick to what you have been doing. Exercise should not exceed pre-pregnancy levels. ACSM suggests that moderate to hard is quite safe for a woman who is accustomed to this level of exercise.

Heart rate monitors are not recommended to gauge intensity. Instead you should use the RPE (rate of perceived exertion) scale. Overall, on a scale of 1-10 you will want to stay between a 5 and 8. You can also use the Talk Test - where you can speak a full sentence while working out. During your first trimester your perceived exertion will be different. What was a 5 yesterday might be an 8 today. It depends on how rested you feel, and morning sickness.

Eat a snack or meal with carbohydrates, protein and a little fat within the hour of exercising eg. an apple smeared with nut butter.



PREGNANCY EXERCISE DON'TS

Avoid lying on your back or standing still for long periods of time. Also avoid repetitive, strenuous movements. Competitive events, contact sports, activities with a high risk of falling, scuba diving and Hot Yoga/Pilates should all be avoided.

Don't push it. You might feel frustrated by some of the limitations that pregnancy places on your agility. For example, weight gain and laxity in ligaments and joints reduce your running speed. The weight in pregnancy increases the force on your hips and knees. Your fine motor skills might feel sluggish inviting injury as a result.

Overall don't get overtired, don't continue if you feel lack of coordination or discomfort, don't forget adequate fluid, and don't forget a thorough cool down.

Don't ignore if any of the following occur: vaginal bleeding, regular painful contractions, amniotic fluid leakage, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache, chest pain, muscle weakness affecting balance, calf pain or anything that does not feel "right". Discontinue exercise immediately and see your healthcare provider.

SHOULD I DO CORE EXERCISE?

Core exercises are extremely important both during pregnancy and afterwards. As mentioned above, it is important you do not lie on your back for extended periods of time. It is important that you do core exercises specifically for pregnancy.

As your belly expands, it may seem counterintuitive to work on strengthening the muscles around the area that increases in size as a natural part of pregnancy. Before I explain why ab exercises during pregnancy is not counterintuitive, let me tell you what the core is. As simply as possible, your core is defined as all the parts of the body except for your limbs and head. Think of your core as your abs, chest, back and hips. And 9 months of ignoring this core body part (pun intended) can lead to muscle imbalances and belly distention.

Note: Your core exercises will be different if you have an abdominal separation, called **diastasis recti**. This condition can be present during pregnancy and afterwards.

IMPORTANT CORE MUSCLES

The transverse abdominis supports your baby during pregnancy. The fibers act just like a corset, pulling the core in from all angles (front and back). They are the most important of the muscle groups of the abdomen. The pelvic floor and TA keep your belly from dropping to your toes. The TA and PF, together with the uterus, work to push your baby out during delivery. Having those muscles be as strong and flexible as possible during labor while greatly ease your baby's entry into the world and you'll be grateful for that.

Not only do the TA and PF help during delivery, they are affected by just being pregnant. So doesn't it make sense to focus a few ab exercises to strengthen them?



While in a seated position I want you to incorporate the TA, pelvic floor and diaphragm. Take a deep breathe, inhale and exhale.

Now place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly button.

Take a deep inhale while letting your belly button and lower rib cage expand. Don't let the shoulders rise or hand on your chest move (as they probably did in your first breath).

As you exhale pull your belly button towards your baby, letting your abdominal cage "hug" your baby. This is the action of the deep core muscle – the TA – as you exhale. If you truly engaged the TA, your hips did not tilt, and the only movement came from the belly. As you pull your belly button towards your baby - your spine might move towards the chair. This is fine as long as your hips did not tilt.

Perform this TA breath exercise for 30 seconds on and 30 seconds off, or 5-10 repetitions.

Planks ... it's important you activate the transverse abdominis in a plank position ... think about hugging your baby with your belly muscles!

