

Exercise During Pregnancy



Regular exercise can help you adapt to the changes your body is going through during pregnancy. Exercising may help you relax, and it gets you ready for labor and delivery. Talk with your healthcare provider about the kinds of activities you can do. Then go ahead and enjoy them.



Get started

Even if you didn't exercise before pregnancy, it's not too late to start. Choose an activity that you like and that fits your lifestyle. Begin slowly and build up a little at a time. Check with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program. The following tips may help you get started:

- Choose a time and place to exercise each day.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes and comfortable athletic shoes.
- Stretch before and after you exercise. (Be sure to stretch slowly and to hold stretches for 30 to 40 seconds.)

Be active

Unless your healthcare provider says otherwise, try to exercise for 30 minutes or more most days of the week:

- Overall conditioning, such as swimming, bicycling, or walking, is especially beneficial.
- Aerobics and exercises that increase your pulse rate help condition your body and strengthen your heart. Ask about special prenatal aerobics classes.

Exercise safely

These tips will help you have a safe, healthy workout:

- Stay cool. Stop exercising if you feel overheated.
- Slow down if you're out of breath. If you can't talk during exercise, lower the intensity of the workout.
- Watch the intensity of your workout. Only do moderate-intensity (not strenuous) exercise.
- Stay off your back. Lying on your back can decrease blood flow to your baby.
- Drink water before, during, and after your workout.
- Eat 300 extra calories a day. A light snack before and after you exercise will help keep your energy up.
- Don't do activities needing balancing skills later in pregnancy.

Do Kegel exercises

Kegel exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles used in childbirth. These muscles are the same ones used to stop the flow of urine. Do Kegel exercises daily:

- Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles for a count of 3.
- Relax, then squeeze again.
- Repeat 10 to 15 times in a row at least 3 times a day.
- You can do Kegel exercises anytime and anywhere.

Keep walking

No matter what other exercise you do, try to walk whenever you can:

- If you're working all day, take a lunchtime walk in the park with a friend.
- When you shop, park away from the store entrance and walk the extra distance.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.

When to stop exercising and call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have:

- Shortness of breath before starting exercise
- Vaginal bleeding
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Decreased fetal movement
- Preterm contractions
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain or swelling

- Fluid leaking from the vagina

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