



FITfor**TWO**

Pre & Post Natal Guidelines

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Pre & Post Natal Guidelines

Exercise is an essential part of a living a healthy balanced lifestyle.

It improves bone health, helps prevent disease, reduces stress and fatigue, and generally improves quality of life; all of which are important when there is a baby to grow or a newborn to care for!

Every system in the body is impacted during pregnancy- including the respiratory, circulatory, hormonal, biomechanical and musculoskeletal.

This can often result in shortness of breath, fatigue, postural change, water retention and swelling, varicose veins and skin lesion, joint & lower back pain, pelvis & pelvic floor issues, rectus diastasis (separation of the abdominal muscles) and varying levels of incontinence.

Many women will want to commence or continue with their exercise programs pre & post pregnancy to maintain their health & quality of life.

The traditional medical advice has been for exercising women to slightly reduce their habitual levels of exertion in pregnancy, and for non-exercising women to refrain from strenuous exercise programs.

Research shows that focusing on both aerobic & strength conditioning exercise regimens in healthy pregnant or postnatal women can influence healthy labours, reduce mother's risk of illness (e.g. gestational diabetes and preeclampsia), improves mental health, supports the baby's brain growth and development, and doesn't affect composition of breast milk production.

It is advised to be cleared by Doctor/ GP/ medical advisor or Obstetrician prior to exercise if you are new to an exercise regime.





INFORMATIVE



1st Trimester (1-12 weeks +/-)

The mother-to-be may be experiencing morning sickness or be feeling tired. This initial stage of pregnancy is where there is the most risk of miscarriage.

Take care not to overexert or overheat your body, and above all, don't push yourself too much.



2nd Trimester (13-26 weeks +/-)

This is usually the time when women feel most energetic during pregnancy. You might be tempted to push yourself, but it's important to be aware that your weight and center of gravity are going through a period of flux, which affects balance and alignment.

Now you can start incorporating modifications to your workouts, including what you might need to avoid.

Remember to let your PT/ GF instructors know where you are in your pregnancy.

SUGGESTION

There's nothing too specific that you can't do just yet, but it's a good time to get educated on the adjustments you'll need to make throughout the duration of your pregnancy. Remember; every body is different and will have unique experiences through pregnancy. Pay attention to your sensations and stay hydrated.

Instead of trying to go up a level, revisit the basics within your workouts, like breathing, balance and mobilization. Focus on controlled movements, focus on tension and stability.

GF classes are recommended to participate in, but consider reducing the intensity to avoid the body temperature and heart rate elevating too high. Even in the first trimester, the amount of "sit up" abdominal exercises need to be reduced. Instead, focus more on T-zone activation and the pelvic floor muscles.

1. Avoid too much abdominal work

During pregnancy, avoid focusing too much on the Rectus Abdominus, (abs) as this can lead to over tightening & stretching; rectus diastasis. However- moderately training the core and lumbar/pelvic stability will aid posture and maintain strength during pregnancy.

2. Avoid too much inner thigh work

We want to avoid inner thigh work because your adductors attach to your pubic symphysis (your pubic bone). When someone is in the advanced stages of pregnancy, their ligaments and joints become more relaxed. Many pregnant women experience some groin pain & instability as the pubic bone starts to separate if there is too much strain in this area.

3. Avoid prone positions (lying on the stomach)

At this stage of pregnancy, lying on the stomach becomes very uncomfortable as the baby is showing. Choose kneeling (tabletop) variations, seated or standing work instead, using supportive props when needed.

4. Avoid supine positions (lying on the back)

Limit exercises done on your back (and especially forward flexion/ fold with your legs together), which can compress the inferior vena cava and the aorta, making your feel dizzy.



INFORMATIVE



Third Trimester (27 weeks +/-)

You made it to the homestretch! You're likely feeling tired again and possibly more anxious, given that baby will be arriving soon.

During the third trimester, the mother's posture changes dramatically due to the baby's increased growth.

A lordosis-kyphosis posture becomes more evident.

Postnatal

Congrats on your new baby! Life caring for a newborn can be overwhelming, especially when you add in the sleep deprivation new mothers experience.

Self-care is of the utmost importance now.

SUGGESTION

Grant yourself more permission to relax, take it slow and breathe deeply in your workouts- your final trimester will likely be the most challenging.

Standing exercises are great, but opt for a wider, turned-out stance to accommodate your belly. In addition to the belly, most women find that their breasts are growing, too, which may lead to back pain.

Strengthening and stretching your upper body, chest and back will counteract your newfound body alignment and help you feel great.

If you feel any pain in your belly button as you move, that could signal a hernia, so it's best to see your doctor right away.

Avoid all abdominal exercises, inner thigh work, supine and prone positions.

Performing some light exercise when you're feeling ready can help prevent common postpartum issues, such as lower-back and shoulder tension; the deep breathing emphasized leads to more energy, mental clarity, and patience.

Whatever kind of birth you've had, beginning some movement can help to accelerate the recovery process, making you feel calmer and more connected in the process. Please listen to your body, nurse / Obstetrician.

The right exercises can also help heal diastasis recti, which is an excessive separation of the abdominals common in postpartum women.



Other recommendations for exercising when pregnant include:

- ▶ **Maintain a moderate intensity:** due to the cardiac changes, the body is already in an exercised state, and therefore don't want to increase heart rate too much.
- ▶ **Keep cool:** avoid hot, humid conditions, wear loose clothing, stand near a fan or air-conditioner if in gym. As the baby is not able to regulate temperature.
- ▶ **Stay hydrated,** drink lots of water even if swimming.
- ▶ **Warm-up and cool-down well:** due to circulatory changes the mother will need to warm-up and cool-down to avoid blood pooling and leg cramps.
- ▶ **Avoid twisting and wide lunge/stance positions** as this can put extra stress on pelvis.
- ▶ **Activate pelvic floor muscles** during exercises to keep as strong as possible, during the later stages may be harder to feel.
- ▶ **Stop if feeling dizzy,** nauseous, vaginal bleeding or leakage of amniotic fluid.

Pilates for Natal women

Pilates is safe to practice during pregnancy, even if you've never done it before. It is regarded as one of the **recommended forms of exercise** for pre- natal women, as it accommodates the needs of the expectant mother.

Pre- natal Pilates becomes about **building and reinforcing the support system**, instead of increasing the strength of the abdominal contraction.

Doing Pilates on the equipment, such as the Reformer, or on the mat can safely **boost your physical and mental health**. Because Pilates focuses on **increasing stability**, in addition to strengthening the entire body, it can help **relieve joint pain**—and prevent it from even occurring in the first place.

It is known for helping to relieve back and hip pain and sciatica while helping to alleviate symptoms of pubic synthesis, a common pregnancy condition through **focus on better posture, alignment and body awareness**.

The **focus on breathing and mind-body connection** in Pilates may aid breath regulation and prepare mothers for labour and childbirth. These factors also help increase resolve, to better cope with the emotional ups and downs many women experience during pregnancy.

If you aren't experienced on the Pilates Reformer, make sure to communicate with your instructor and take it slowly and carefully.