

PREGNANCY MYTHS BUSTED!



Pregnancy is not the time to make fitness gains or set goals, but you can still exercise despite what you might have heard. Find out how to do so safely...

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There can be a fear surrounding exercise during pregnancy. Your body is already going through a momentous change – and you may wonder if it's safe to still keep up with your exercise routine. Pregnancy is a time to be more receptive to your body's needs than ever. Exercise can make you feel good, lift your mood, help manage weight gain and prepare your body for the birth, but it's essential that it's undertaken with your safety and that of your unborn child coming first.

Some days you'll feel full of energy, and others you will feel tired. Be responsive to this; don't stick to a programme just because it's written – this is a time of adaptation.

Be careful not to push through any fatigue and if you're finding it hard, it's important to stop. What's more, do not undertake any forms of exercise where you risk being hit or falling over.

1 Healthy hormones

When you're pregnant your body will produce a hormone called relaxin in preparation for the birth. It will make all of your ligaments and tendons a lot more flexible than before. Bear this in mind when undertaking any exercise and be careful not to push too hard and risk injuring yourself.

2 Strengthen your muscles

Strengthening your pelvic floor during pregnancy is really important. These muscles will come under a lot of strain throughout pregnancy and labour, so following simple pelvic floor exercises daily can really help.

3 SAY NO TO SIT-UPS

AFTER 16 WEEKS DO NOT DO ANY EXERCISE ON YOUR BACK, AS THE WEIGHT OF YOUR BUMP CAN PRESS ON BLOOD VESSELS AND LEAD TO FAINTING. SIT-UPS ARE ALSO A NO-NO DURING PREGNANCY OR THE MONTHS FOLLOWING THE BIRTH. THERE ARE EXERCISES YOU CAN DO TO STRENGTHEN YOUR ABDOMINALS AND EASE BACKACHE, BUT THESE ARE DONE ON ALL FOURS, IN THE BOX POSITION.





5 TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN

You can continue to run during pregnancy, but only if you have been doing it as part of your fitness regime beforehand. Now is not the time to take up running if you have no previous experience. You must also modify your programme as you get further into the pregnancy, slowing down or stopping if necessary. As your pregnancy progresses you will be getting bigger and this will increase

the impact on your joints and affect your sense of balance. If you do decide to maintain your running sessions, stay cool and well hydrated throughout. Do not push through any pain and listen to your body's needs at all times.

Remember, with running and all forms of exercise during pregnancy, the health of you and your baby must be paramount. If something is not comfortable or does not feel right then do not continue.

4 Keep up your cardio

Gentle cardiovascular exercise, such as walking and swimming, are excellent choices. Walking can be done throughout your pregnancy and can easily fit into your day. Be sure to wear supportive footwear, a well-fitted sports bra and comfortable, loose clothing in layers, so that you can maintain a comfortable body temperature, ensuring you do not overheat.

Swimming is a highly recommended option as it's non-weight bearing and therefore very kind on your joints. Furthermore, the water keeps your temperature and that of your unborn baby reduced.

6 Class act

If you've always enjoyed exercise classes, there's no need to stop, but it is important to seek out sessions that are specifically aimed at pregnant women and opt for post-natal fitness classes for at least the first few months after giving birth, too.

High-impact classes are off the agenda for a while, so look for gentle, low-impact workouts that also promote good breathing practice and wellbeing, such as pregnancy Pilates, which will encourage both strength and gentle mobility, and help strengthen your abdominal and pelvic floor effectively.

As with all classes, ensure the teacher is fully accredited in training pregnant and post-natal women and if there is something that does not feel comfortable, stop immediately.

7 Post-natal fitness

A post-natal fitness regime can be started after your six-week check up if you have had a normal delivery, and 12-week check if you have had a caesarean section and the doctor has given permission.

Ease yourself back in very gently and do not look to pick up where you left off pre-pregnancy – this will not be possible. Pregnancy is a wonderful time, but your body will need to be nurtured afterwards. Look to undertake no more than 20 minutes a day initially and nothing high-impact.

Before resuming running, I would recommend strengthening your abdominal muscles and pelvic floor with something like post-natal Pilates – this will thoroughly prepare your body when you are returning to exercise..

TOP TIPS FOR EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY

- Check with your midwife or doctor that it is safe for you to exercise
- Stay well hydrated
- Stay cool, wearing loose comfortable clothing
- Stop if something feels uncomfortable
- Stop if you feel dizzy or light-headed

- Do not do any exercise lying on your back, especially after 16 weeks
- Do not do any form of sit-up
- Do not exercise to reach a new goal
- Keep exercise gentle and at a low-intensity
- Stop immediately and call your midwife if you get abdominal pain, cramps or bleeding