



Exercise During Pregnancy

BODY CHANGES AND RESPONSES DURING PREGNANCY^{1,2}

- Changes in your hormones will make your joints more flexible, which can increase your injury risk.
- More oxygen is needed for exercise.
- Your heart rate at rest and during exercise will be higher than usual. This means your heart rate will not be an accurate way to monitor exercise intensity.
- Your risk for low blood pressure when standing up from a seated or lying position (especially during the 3rd trimester) will be higher.
- Oxygen delivery to your baby does not appear to be impaired by moderate exercise. Fetal heart rate will increase during exercise as intensity and duration increases, but it will return to its normal rate during recovery.²

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY^{1,2}

- Lowers risk of gestational diabetes and improved management of existing gestational diabetes.
- Lowers risk of preeclampsia.
- Lowers incidence of low-back pain, improved posture.
- Improves mood, energy, and sleep quality.
- Prepares your body to deal with labor and get back in shape after your baby is born.
- Prevents excess weight gain.
- Promotes better endurance and muscle tone.
- Decreases feelings of bloating, swelling, and constipation.

SAFETY TIPS

All pregnant women should be evaluated by their doctor before starting an exercise routine to rule out conditions that could make exercise risky.

WHAT TO AVOID^{1,2}

- Avoid exercise in the supine position (lying on back) after the 1st trimester. Lying on your back during pregnancy can put pressure on a vein that brings blood to your heart, which can decrease the amount of blood pumped to your heart and cause dizziness when you stand again.
- Avoid exercise in hot and humid conditions (ex: strenuous outdoor activities, hot yoga, saunas, hot tubs), exercising at extreme elevations (>6,000 ft), and scuba diving.
- Avoid isometric movements (exercises that require you to hold one position for an extended period, such as wall sits) and heavy resistance training. These exercises may cause a rapid increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
- Avoid overly aggressive flexibility programs.
- Avoid activities with an increased risk of falling, joint damage, or abdominal trauma, including: skiing, skating, tennis, softball, horseback riding, and basketball.
- Avoid pull-ups, sit-ups, waist-twisting movements, holding your breath, extensive hopping, or jumping.

WARNING SIGNS TO STOP EXERCISE¹

- Bleeding
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain/swelling
- Preterm labor
- Decreased fetal movement
- Amniotic fluid leakage



EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY

WHERE TO START

- Were you previously active and no complications or history of complications?
- Unless otherwise indicated by your doctor, remain active and modify exercises as needed, decrease your exercise intensity. You may need close monitoring with physician if you are planning on doing strenuous exercise.
- Were you previously active, but have a history of pre-term labor or intrauterine growth restriction?
- Check with your doctor before starting exercise. You may need to decrease your physical activity during 2nd and 3rd trimesters.
- Were you previously inactive? Are you having complications?
- Get evaluated by your doctor first. If cleared for exercise, it is important to start slow, with nonstrenuous exercise as little as 5 minutes per day, adding 5 minutes to your sessions each week until you can exercise for 30 minutes per session.⁵
- Unless it is not recommended by your doctor, aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week spread across at least 3 days per week, if not daily.³

TIPS

- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise to help maintain normal body temperature during exercise.
 - Try activities with a low risk of falls or contact (modified yoga and Pilates, stationary biking, swimming, walking, moderate-intensity weightlifting)
 - Use the “talk test” to gauge exercise intensity – You should be able to hold a conversation during moderate exercise. If you feel like you need to catch your breath while talking, this means your exercise is vigorous, so decrease your exercise intensity.
 - Wear breathable clothing and a supportive sports bra.
- * Please speak with your physician about these recommendations before implementing.

The information contained here within is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor, go to the emergency department, or call 911 immediately. GemCare Wellness (GCW) does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or other information that may be mentioned here within. Reliance on any information provided by GCW, GCW employees, contracted writers, or medical professionals presenting content for publication here within is solely at your own risk.

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