

# EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

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**Staying active** during pregnancy is important and can have lots of health benefits! Exercise during pregnancy can help improve or maintain physical fitness levels and reduce risk for developing gestational diabetes, hypertensive disorders and reduced instances of cesarean births, depression, and report of discomfort and pain. Research has found that pregnancy is an excellent time for women to adopt healthy behaviors - motivation to live a healthy lifestyle is at an all-time high!



## So what and how much activity should you do while pregnant?

For most women with uncomplicated pregnancies what you were doing PRE-pregnancy is a good guide for what's recommended DURING pregnancy (with some adjustments in intensity and posture as the pregnancy progresses). Similarly, if you were not very active prior to becoming pregnant, you want to start slowly with something lower intensity (walking) or lower volume (shorter weight training sessions).

With any activity, it is crucial to consult your physician prior to starting your exercise plan. We recommend discussing your personal fitness plan with your provider to maintain a healthy, safe, pregnancy for you and baby.

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## AEROBIC EXERCISE

Aiming to hit the United States Department of Health and Human Services Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans is a safe goal for most pregnant women. These recommendations include at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity spread throughout the week, and at least 2 days of strength training.

### Aerobic exercises that would be safe for most pregnant women include:

- Walking or hiking
- Light intensity strength/circuit training
- Jogging or running
- Biking
- Swimming
- Rowing
- Yoga/Pilates
- Cardio equipment: stair-climber, treadmill, elliptical, rower, bike

## STRENGTH TRAINING

Strength training can increase your muscle mass and bone density and improve your overall flexibility and mobility – impacts that help you feel better now and improve health long term. If you are strength training 2 times per week, aiming to perform exercises that use all your major muscle groups each time.

### Strength training activities that would be safe for most pregnant women include:

- Lifting weights
- Using resistance bands
- Bodyweight exercises such as modified push-ups and squats



### How can you tell if an activity is performed at an appropriate intensity?

A great way to assess the level of intensity for your training during pregnancy is to use what is known as the “talk test.” If you are able to carry a conversation with someone while you exercise, then you pass the talk test, and that level of intensity is likely safe for you! If you cannot hold a conversation, this indicates the intensity is likely higher than it should be and your heart rate may be too elevated.

### Ways to reduce the intensity/ lower heart rate:

- Slow down
- Reduce weigh/load
- Add more rest time
- Change/lessen total duration

### Here are some important things to consider for exercise when pregnant:

First and foremost, listening to your body and symptoms is incredibly important in any stage in life, but especially in pregnancy. If you’re unsure, consult your doctor!



## There are a few postures & activities that you should avoid to be safe during pregnancy:

- Unstable, or any activities where falling is a risk.

*Ex. bosu balls, unstable surfaces at the gym, rough terrain, skiing, ice skating, surfing, off-road cycling, gymnastics, exercises leaving the floor (box jumps).*

- Contact sports: boxing.
- High temperatures: hot yoga, hot pilates.
- Avoid laying flat on your back for extended periods of time.
- Static standing for too long in one position.
- Avoid stretching too deeply.

*Joints and ligaments are more relaxed in pregnancy due to a hormone called relaxin. Avoid bouncing stretches or stretches past what you're typically capable of.*



## Here are some additional considerations that can help keep you healthy, safe and having fun:

1. Short, consistent sessions are just as effective as long ones.
2. Choose activities that feel engaging and enjoyable for you.
3. Pay attention to your eating and hydration habits. Make sure to eat a pre-workout snack and carry extra snacks and water with you.
4. Pay attention to the temperature to avoid overheating.
5. Always listen to your body.
6. Consider hiring a coach or trainer to help with form and programming to stay safe.



### **Main Takeaway**

Pregnancy is one of the best times to consider your activity to maintain and build a healthy lifestyle for both you and your baby. Exercise is one of the most beneficial habits to include both during and after your pregnancy!



### **Resources**

ACOG is the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:

[News>](#)

[FAQs>](#)

US Department of Health and Human Services:  
[Read Article Here>](#)

Center for Disease Control (CDC):  
[Read Article Here>](#)