

Exercise During Pregnancy: A Guide to Safe and Effective Fitness



Highlights

Exercising during pregnancy can help prepare your body for birth. Only do exercises that match your fitness level. Aerobic activities and strengthening exercises can be beneficial. If you have health conditions or a complicated pregnancy, avoid exercising. Consult your doctor before starting any exercise routine.

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Benefits of Exercise During Pregnancy

Help prepare your body for childbirth and recovery afterward

Reduce back and pelvic pain

Strengthen muscles and joints to support extra pregnancy weight

Improve overall fitness

Prevent excessive weight gain

Lower the risk of pregnancy complications

Reduce the risk of mental health concerns

Exercise Frequency During Pregnancy

Your previous fitness level before pregnancy

The stage of your pregnancy

Exercise Intensity

Short Exercise Sessions

Recommended Types of Exercise

Aerobic Exercises

Walking

Cycling

Swimming

Fitness classes

Strengthening Exercises

Yoga and Pilates

Resistance training

Push-Ups

Position yourself on your hands and knees.

Keep your knees under your hips and hands under your shoulders.

Lower your torso by bending your elbows, keeping your back straight.
Repeat up to 10 times while breathing steadily.

Upper Back Strengthening Exercise

Sit or stand with a straight back.
Bend your arms and lift them to shoulder height.
Press your elbows back, squeezing the muscles near your shoulder blades.
Bend forward to stretch your back muscles.
Relax and repeat up to 5 times.

Stomach Strengthening Exercise

Position yourself on your hands and knees.
Keep your back straight and engage your lower stomach muscles.
Hold for 5 slow breaths, then relax.
Repeat up to 10 times.
You can also do this exercise while standing or sitting.

Pelvic Tilt Exercise

Position yourself on your hands and knees.
Keep your back straight and engage your lower stomach muscles.
Arch your back and hold for several seconds before relaxing.
Repeat up to 10 times.

Stand with your shoulders and bottom against a wall, knees slightly bent.
Pull your tummy button toward your spine, flattening your back against the wall.
Hold for a few seconds, then release.
Repeat up to 10 times.

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles.
Hold for 3 to 5 seconds while breathing normally.
Relax and rest for 5 seconds.
Repeat up to 10 times, gradually increasing the hold time to 10 seconds.
Aim to do this exercise 3 times a day.

Exercises to Avoid

Lying on Your Back

Certain Sports

Football

Hockey

Judo

Kickboxing

Squash

Tennis

Are high-impact or repetitive

Involve twists, turns, high stepping, or sudden stops

Include jumping or bouncing

Activities with a Fall Risk

Cycling

Downhill skiing

Gymnastics

Horse riding

Ice hockey

Changes in Pressure and Altitude

High Temperatures

When Exercise Is Not Recommended

Pre-eclampsia

Placenta previa

Multiple pregnancy

Bleeding in the second or third trimester

A weak, incompetent, or short cervix

Ruptured membranes \ (water breaking) \

Poorly controlled type 1 diabetes
Hypertension \ (high blood pressure)\
Thyroid disease
Serious cardiovascular, respiratory, or systemic disorders

Exercise Safety Tips

Always warm up before exercising and cool down afterward.
Avoid strenuous exercise in hot or humid weather-opt for cool, well-ventilated spaces.
Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
Wear comfortable clothing, appropriate shoes, a supportive maternity bra, and loose-fitting attire.
If attending exercise classes, ensure your instructor is qualified and aware of your pregnancy stage.
Try water-based exercises like swimming, as water supports your increased weight.
Walking, low-impact aerobics, and stationary cycling are excellent moderate aerobic options that reduce joint stress.

Warning Signs to Stop Exercising

Chest pain or unexplained shortness of breath
Dizziness
Headache
Muscle weakness
Calf pain or sudden swelling of the ankles, hands, or face
Vaginal bleeding
Nausea and vomiting
Abdominal, back, or pelvic pain

Tools and Assistance

Who to Reach Out To:

Your Doctor or General Practitioner - helps assess your overall health and provides recommendations for safe physical activity.

Obstetrician or Midwife - offers guidance on appropriate exercises at different stages of pregnancy.

Physiotherapist specializing in prenatal care - can develop a personalized exercise plan, especially if you experience back pain, pelvic discomfort, or other issues.

Certified Fitness Instructor specializing in pregnancy - ensures you're doing exercises correctly and not overexerting yourself.

Helpful Tools:

Exercise Log - keep track of the exercises you do, how long you exercise, and how you feel afterward. This helps monitor progress and adjust your activity levels as needed.