

Sports and Physical Activity During Pregnancy: Guidelines and Safety Tips



Highlights

Engaging in sports and physical activities during pregnancy can have significant benefits for both you and your baby.

However, it is important to understand which sports are safe to engage in and how your body will change throughout pregnancy.

By making informed decisions, you can ensure the safety of both you and your baby while exercising.

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Benefits of Exercise During Pregnancy

Maintaining fitness: Keeping active during pregnancy helps improve physical strength and endurance, which can aid in labor and recovery.

Preventing excessive weight gain: Regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight throughout your pregnancy.

Improving mental well-being: Physical activity is known to boost mood, reduce stress, and help manage the emotional ups and downs of pregnancy.

Recommended Types of Exercise

Strengthening and pelvic floor exercises: These exercises help support the muscles involved in labor and delivery, and they can help prevent complications later on.

Medium-intensity aerobic exercises such as brisk walking, cycling, and swimming.

Low-risk, non-contact, or limited-contact activities: These activities support your weight, do not involve sudden shifts in position, have a limited risk of falls, and allow for exercise at low or moderate intensity. These activities are specifically designed for pregnant women.

Swimming and water-based activities, such as aqua-natal classes, are highly recommended, as they support your weight while providing an excellent full-body workout. However, be mindful to avoid heated pools and spas to prevent overheating.

Sport and Your Level of Fitness

If You Are Not Currently Active

If You Are Already Active

Stay comfortable during exercise.

Warm up before starting physical activity.

Cool down afterward to prevent injury.

Risks of Playing Sport While Pregnant

First Trimester (1 to 12 Weeks)

Avoid exercising in hot or humid conditions.
Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
Drink plenty of water throughout your workout.

Second and Third Trimesters (13 to 40 Weeks)

Medical Conditions That May Affect Your Ability to Exercise

Heart or lung problems
Poorly controlled diabetes
Being underweight or obese
Pregnancy complications (current or previous)
Anemia or other blood-related issues
Multiple pregnancies (twins, triplets, etc.)

Warning Signs to Watch For During Exercise

Chest pain or discomfort
Shortness of breath that's unusual
Decreased fetal movement
Abdominal pain or contractions
Vaginal bleeding or leakage of fluid

You experience sudden swelling in your hands, ankles, or face
You have pain or swelling in your calves
You feel muscle weakness or fatigue
You feel lightheaded or faint

Sports to Avoid During Pregnancy

Require high levels of exertion or may lead to overheating
Have a high risk of falling
Pose a risk of impact to your abdomen
Include excessive jumping or bouncing
Involve diving or high-altitude activities
Require lifting heavy weights

Include quick movements or changes in direction

Tools and Assistance

Doctor: Your primary care provider will give you personalized advice based on your health and pregnancy history.

Midwife: A midwife can offer specific guidance on exercise during pregnancy, especially if you plan to give birth in a non-hospital setting.

Obstetrician: If you have a high-risk pregnancy, your obstetrician will work with you to ensure your exercise routine is safe and beneficial.

Physiotherapist: A physiotherapist can help with exercises aimed at maintaining your posture, flexibility, and strength during pregnancy, as well as provide tailored rehabilitation support if needed.