

Pregnancy - Common Symptoms and Care Tips  
Article

# Pregnancy Exercises - Staying Active and Healthy

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## Exercise During Pregnancy

### Is it safe to exercise during pregnancy?

#### If you are healthy and your pregnancy is normal:

• It is okay to continue or begin **regular physical activity** if you are healthy and your pregnancy is normal.

• Physical exercise does not **raise your chances of having a miscarriage**, having a baby with low birth weight, or having a baby too soon.

• During your early prenatal appointments, however, it is critical to discuss exercise with your obstetrician or another member of your health care team. If your doctor gives you the go-ahead to exercise, **you can talk about what activities you can perform safely.**



### What are the benefits of exercise during pregnancy?

#### • Regular exercise during pregnancy has a number of advantages for both you and your fetus:

- Back discomfort is lessened.
- Constipation is relieved.
- Reduces your chances of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and cesarean birth.
- Promotes a healthy pregnancy weight gain.
- Strengthens your heart and blood vessels while improving your overall fitness.
- After your kid is born, it will assist you in losing the baby weight.



### How much should I exercise during pregnancy?

• Aim for at least **150 minutes** of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week for pregnant women.

• An aerobic exercise is one in which you work large muscles in your body in a rhythmic manner (such as those in your legs and arms).



• You're moving enough to get your **heart rate up and sweating at a moderate effort**. You can still converse normally, but you won't be able to sing.

• **Brisk walking and general gardening** (raking, weeding, or digging), are examples of moderate-intensity aerobic activities.

• You can divide the **150 minutes into 30-minute workouts on 5 days of the week** or into smaller 10-minute workouts throughout each day.

• Start carefully and progressively increase your activity if you are **new to exercising**. Start small, with as little as **5 minutes every day**. Increase your activity by 5 minutes per week until you can keep active for 30 minutes per day.



• If you were quite active prior to becoming pregnant, **you can continue to do so with your obstetrician's permission**. If you lose weight, though, you may need to increase the **number of calories you consume**.

• If you begin an aerobic activity program (such as running, swimming, cycling, or aerobics classes), **inform the instructor that you are pregnant and start with no more than 15 minutes of continuous exercise 3 times per week**. Gradually up to daily 30-minute sessions.<sup>1</sup>



### Exercise tips when you're pregnant:<sup>2</sup>

• Always **warm-up and cool down** before and after exercise.

• Try to stay active daily - **30 minutes of walking per day** is ideal, but if that isn't possible, any quantity is better than none.



• Avoid **intense exercise** in hot weather.



• Drink **lots of water and other fluids**.

• If you go to exercise classes, make sure your **instructor is qualified and knows you're pregnant**, as well as how many weeks you're expecting.

• Try swimming because the **water will support your extra weight**.

• Horseback riding, downhill skiing, ice hockey, gymnastics, and cycling are all exercises that **should be done with caution**. Falls carry a risk of damage to your baby.

### Exercises to avoid in pregnancy<sup>3</sup>

• Because the weight of your lungs presses on the main blood vessel delivering blood back to your heart, **you should avoid lying flat on your back** for long periods of time, especially after 16 weeks.

• Do not engage in contact sports, such as **kickboxing, judo, or squash where you may be hit**.

• Do not go scuba diving because **your baby is at risk of decompression sickness and gas embolism** (gas bubbles in the bloodstream).

• Do not exercise at altitudes **higher than 2,500 meters above sea level** because you and your baby are in danger of altitude sickness.

### REFERENCES

1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Exercise During Pregnancy. Last reviewed July 2016. Available at: <http://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy>. Last accessed at 2/15/2022.  
2. NHS. Exercise in pregnancy. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/exercise-in-pregnancy/>.  
3. NHS. Exercises to avoid in pregnancy. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/exercises-to-avoid-in-pregnancy/>. Last accessed at 2/15/2022.

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## References:

1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Exercise During Pregnancy. Last reviewed: July 2019. Available at: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy>. Last accessed at: 29/01/2022
2. Exercise in pregnancy. Page last reviewed: 20 January 2020. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/exercise/#:~:text=Keep%20up%20your%20normal%20daily,in%20later%20pregnancy%20and%20labour>. Last accessed at: 29/01/2022