

Exercise During Pregnancy

Is it safe to exercise during pregnancy?¹

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?¹

- **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 caesarean 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?¹

- 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.²



Exercise tips when you're pregnant:²

- 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 pregnancy²

- Because the weight of your bump 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 2019. Available at: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy>. Last accessed at: 29/01/2022

2. NHS. 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