



## OB-GYN Women's Physicians Assoc., Inc.

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### EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

In this discussion of exercise during pregnancy, you will learn which muscle groups you should concentrate on when exercising and tips for exercising during pregnancy. You will also find out what kind of exercises you are allowed to do when you should stop exercising.

#### ***When should I start exercising?***

Childbirth is among the most physically stressful challenges a woman will ever face. The best time to begin is when you are planning to get pregnant. The sooner you begin exercising, the better you will feel. A big mistake most women make is not starting an exercise program until their last 3 months of pregnancy when they start childbirth classes.

Regular exercise during pregnancy will lead to better posture, strengthen muscles needed for labor and delivery, lessen some of the discomforts of pregnancy, and reduce tiredness.

#### ***Which muscle groups are most important to exercise?***

In addition to your heart, the three muscle groups you should concentrate on during pregnancy are the muscles of your back, pelvis and abdomen.

- Strengthening your abdominal muscles will make it easier to support the increasing weight of your baby.
- Strengthening pelvic muscles will permit your vagina to widen more easily during childbirth and prevent urinary problems (leaking urine when you cough or sneeze) after delivery.
- Strengthening back muscles and exercises to improve your posture will minimize the strain of pregnancy on your lower back and help prevent discomfort caused by poor posture.

#### ***What kind of exercise am I allowed to do?***

Many old ideas about strenuous exercise during pregnancy have been disproved in recent years. What you do in sports during pregnancy depends on your health and on how active you were before you became pregnant.

This is probably not a good time to take up a strenuous sport, but if you were active before you became pregnant, periods of no activity.

- Don't try to do too much. You should stop immediately if you feel tired, short of breath, or dizzy.
- Drink water often before and after exercise to prevent dehydration. Take a break in your workout to drink more water if needed.
- Don't participate in sports and exercise that pose a danger of falling or being bumped.
- Be very careful of your back. You should avoid positions and exercises that increase the bend in your back. This puts extra stress on the stretched abdominal muscles and compresses your spinal joints. Deep knee bends, full sit-ups, double leg raises, and straight-leg-toe touches may also injure the ligaments that connect your back joints and legs.
- Do not get overheated; limit outdoor exercise in hot, humid weather. Also, avoid use of hot tubs, whirlpools, or saunas.
- You should not exercise if you have an illness with a temperature of 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C) or higher.
- Avoid jerky, bouncy, or high-impact motions that require jarring or rapid changes in direction. These may cause back, abdominal, pelvic, and leg pain, and they may cause you to lose your balance.
- Wear a good fitting, support bra to protect your enlarged breasts
- Make exercise a part of your daily life. Daily tasks can double as exercise sessions.
  - Tighten your abdominal muscles when standing or sitting.
  - Squat to lift anything, light or heavy.
  - Rotate your feet and ankles anytime you have your feet elevated.
  - Check your posture each time you pass a mirror.

***When should I stop exercising?***

You should stop exercising, call your doctor if any unusual symptoms appear, such as:

- pain
- irregular heartbeat  
(skipped beats or vary rapid beats)
- bleeding
- pelvic pain
- faintness
- difficulty walking

If you have had any problems during your current or previous pregnancies, you should check with our office before doing any kind of exercises during pregnancy. We also recommend that you refer to a book written

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