

Being Active During Pregnancy

ACSM
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MEDICINE®

Do you want to feel better, sleep better and do something healthy for you and your baby?

Studies show that physical activity throughout pregnancy is both safe and beneficial for you and your baby. Pregnant women who do 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity are 25% less likely to have high blood glucose (gestational diabetes), high blood pressure, gain too much weight or suffer from depression. The risk of giving birth to a big baby is also reduced. Even some lower-intensity physical activity leads to health benefits during pregnancy.

Women should be active throughout pregnancy, starting as early as they can. Studies show that physical activity during the first trimester is safe for the baby. In fact, being inactive can actually increase your risk of developing health problems. Talk with your health care provider about what may work best for you about being active during your pregnancy.



**Being active while pregnant is good for you and your baby.
Start now – every minute counts!**

Getting Started

Start Low Go Slow

If you have never been active before, start with walking. Walking is a great way to improve your heart and lung health and is safe for you and your baby. Or find another activity that you enjoy. Gradually add minutes each week.

Keep It Simple

Sit less and move around more. Add more steps to your day by taking the stairs and parking farther away. Go for a 10-minute walk after two of your daily meals. Try “walking meetings” when you don’t need a computer or pen and paper.

Motivation

What will help you stick with a physical activity plan? Choose activities you like that can be added to your daily routine. Join an activity group or meet with an exercise buddy. Schedule active time in your calendars – and support each other!

Build a Plan

Set short-term goals. For example, “I will add 10 more minutes of walking each day this week.” Remember every minute counts, every day, every week. Track your activity with a step counter or your phone.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing to improve your stamina. If you're new to physical activity, start by adding 5 or 10 minutes each day. Gradually build to at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking, stationary cycling, exercising in a pool or dancing). Ask your health care provider if you wish to exercise harder. If you were active before pregnancy continue to be active, but you may need to make changes as your pregnancy progresses.

What?

Any continuous rhythmic physical activity that makes your heart beat faster.

How often?

3-7 days/week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard; "can talk but not sing."

How much?

At least 150 minutes of physical activity/ week.

Remember: Be active however and whenever you can. Do a short walk at lunch, take the stairs or get off the bus one stop early. Activities like raking the lawn or heavy vacuuming count toward your weekly activity! Every minute adds up.

Reasons to stop physical activity and seek medical advice:

- Bleeding or fluid coming from your vagina
- Chest pain
- Dizziness or faintness that does not go away with rest
- Shortness of breath that does not go away with rest ° Regular painful uterine contractions
- Calf pain or swelling

Other Important Physical Activities

Get help with strength training, pelvic floor muscle training or yoga from a certified exercise professional. Visit a pelvic health specialist during pregnancy to learn the best way to train the muscles of your pelvic floor. These important muscles support your pelvic organs, control going to the bathroom and provide pleasure during sex.

Strength Training

Makes you stronger and improves your overall health. You can use the weight of your own body, hand weights, resistance bands or machines.

Pelvic Floor Muscle Training

Simple exercises like Kegels strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor to prevent accidentally peeing when you walk, jog, talk, laugh or sneeze!

Prenatal Yoga and Stretching

Helps keep your muscles flexible and your mind relaxed.

To stay safe and injury free:

- Avoid physical activity when it is hot and humid. Instead, be active in cooler places inside.
- Be active indoors when air pollution is at its worst, usually later in the day, do indoor exercise instead.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- If you have low back pain during pregnancy, water exercise may be an excellent option.
- Physical activity at higher elevations (above ~6000 feet) should be discussed with your health care provider.

Activities to avoid during pregnancy

- Avoid sports or activities where physical contact or falling can occur. This includes activities such as snow or water skiing, horseback riding, gymnastics, Olympic lifts, or games such as basketball, ice hockey or soccer.
- After the first trimester avoid lying on your back for long periods of time during activities such as abdominal exercises or strength training. If you feel unwell while on your back, change position.
- Avoid scuba diving, hot yoga and hot Pilates throughout pregnancy.
- To avoid fainting, don't strain or bear down during physical activity.

More Help

Check out these websites:

American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy>

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology: <https://csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/pregnancy/>

Physical Activity Guidelines: https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/PAG_ExecutiveSummary.pdf

Go to acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.

How will I add minutes of activity **this week?** _____

