

Pregnancy Fitness, Get Active Now

It will reduce constipation, leg cramps, bloating, and swelling. As well, it will prepare your body for the work of labor and delivery, and give you a head start in getting back in shape after the baby is born.

Before you begin an exercise program, talk to your doctor or midwife to confirm that you don't have any health conditions that may limit your activity. Don't hesitate to ask about specific exercises or sports that you like to do. Follow these tips for a safe and healthy exercise during pregnancy:

Start your workout with slow, low-impact activities such as walking, swimming, or yoga.

Exercise with the goal of reaching and keeping a safe fitness level. Pregnancy is not the time to bulk up muscles or shed excess pounds.

Don't exercise vigorously when you're ill or if it's hot or humid outside. Wear comfortable clothing and drink plenty of water.

Begin every workout with at least five minutes of stretching and end your workout with a cool down period. Slow walking or riding a stationary bike are good ways to cool down.

Get up slowly after sitting or lying on the floor to prevent feeling dizzy or faint. After 20 weeks of pregnancy, don't do any exercises on your back. This can cut down the blood flow to your baby.

Don't overdo it. If you can't talk at a normal level during your workout, ease up and slow down. You should feel energized after a workout not exhausted.

Reduce your workout level during the last few months of pregnancy. Exercise will be more difficult as your baby grows.

Work your deep abdominals

Strong abdominals will also help you to maintain good posture. Before starting this exercise, though, you need to know what you're working and why. The deep abdominals refer to the transverse abdominal muscles, which come around from your back and act like a corset. It's these muscles that will help to give your stomach a flatter appearance after the baby is born.

Even though you're not directly working the rectus abdominals (the muscles that run down the front of your abdomen) as you would when you do a sit-up (which shouldn't be attempted during pregnancy), don't worry; this exercise still works these muscles. When they're strong they also contribute to core stability and good posture.

Breathe in and as you breathe out again, pull in your pelvic floor and the deep abdominal muscles. Lift the baby up and in towards your spine, drawing the navel to the back, then lift your pelvic floor muscles to deepen the contraction. Hold this position.

You can do this exercise standing or on all fours. If you're standing, check your posture. If you're on all fours, make sure your hands are in line with your shoulders and your hips are in line with your knees. In both cases, make sure you have a natural curve in your back. You may need to tilt the pelvis to align your back correctly.

Advanced versions of this exercise that you can do after the birth include the plank. Ask an instructor to show you how to do these exercises.

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