



## Exercise During Pregnancy

### Is it safe for me to exercise during pregnancy?

Check with your doctor to make sure that it's safe for you to exercise during your pregnancy. You may have a medical condition that would make exercise harmful to you or your baby. Exercise might help you feel better and achieve healthy weight gain in pregnancy. Exercise can help ease or prevent discomfort during pregnancy. It can also give you extra energy and prepares your body for labor by increasing your stamina and muscle strength. If you have no serious medical problems and you have an uncomplicated pregnancy, it's probably safe for you to do some exercising.

### How should I start an exercise program?

It's best to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. If your doctor approves, you can start exercising at a level that does not cause pain, shortness of breath or excessive tiredness. You may then slowly increase your activity. If you feel uncomfortable, short of breath or very tired, you should reduce your exercise level. If you have already been exercising, it's easier to keep exercising during pregnancy. If you haven't exercised before, you need to start very slowly. Many women find that they need to slow down their level of exercise during pregnancy.

### What types of exercise are best when I'm pregnant?

The most comfortable exercises are those that don't require your body to bear extra weight. Swimming and stationary cycling are good options. Walking and low-impact aerobics are usually well tolerated.

### What should I be careful about?

Avoid activities that increase your risk of falls or injury, such as contact sports or vigorous sports. Even mild injuries to the stomach area can be serious when you're pregnant. After the first 3 months of pregnancy, it's best to avoid exercising while lying on your back, since the weight of the baby may interfere with blood circulation. Also avoid long periods of standing. When the weather is hot, exercise in the early morning or late evening to help prevent you from getting overheated. If you're exercising indoors, make sure the room has enough ventilation. Consider using a fan to help keep you cool. Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Make sure that you're eating a well balanced diet. Normally, pregnancy increases your food requirements by 300 calories a day, even without exercise.

### What problems should I tell my doctor about?

Listen to your body. Talk to your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Blood or fluid coming from your vagina
- Sudden or severe abdominal or vaginal pain
- Contractions that go on for 30 minutes after you stop exercising
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Headache that is severe or won't go away
- Dizziness and nausea
- Dim or blurry vision