



You're pregnant! Congratulations, you are in for an exciting time in your life and exercise should be an important part of your pregnancy.

Here is some information that is useful for every expectant mum to make an educated decision for you and your baby.

Benefits of exercise during pregnancy

- Resistance to fatigue
- Stronger back muscles to manage pain and strain on body
- Improves posture
- Increases self esteem and well-being
- Improves muscle tone and strength
- Manage weight control
- Increases control of your body
- Stress relief
- Increases sleep and management of insomnia
- Prepares you for the physical demands of labour
- Improves circulation—helping to prevent/reduce fluid retention, varicose veins, haemorrhoids
- Faster recovery after labour and return to pre-pregnancy fitness/weight
- Increases ability to cope with the physical demands of motherhood

Pregnancy Exercise Do's and Don'ts

Do Consult Your Doctor/Midwife

While exercise is important during pregnancy, it is recommended that you get medical clearance from your doctor/midwife before taking up or continuing exercise due to specific medical conditions that may not allow you to exercise.

Don't Increase Your Heart Rate

Above 140 beats per minute. Any higher during exercise can put strain on your heart and that of your baby. It is recommended that if you are over this rate that you stop exercising and recover.

Do wear a good bra

Always wear a supportive bra during any form of exercise whether

On land or in the water. Don't buy bras that will fit you 'later' - make sure they fit you at the current stage of your pregnancy.

Don't lie on your back

It is very important that after your first trimester that you no longer lie on your back as the main artery to your womb is located here and can cut the flow of blood to your baby. Adjust your exercises/stretches so that they are upright or seated.

Do eat carbs before exercise

During pregnancy your blood sugar levels can fluctuate rapidly and it is recommended that you always eat foods containing carbohydrates 1-2 hours before exercise and always carry a juice with you to drink should you feel unwell or dizzy. It is also important that if you feel like this to slow down or stop exercising.

Don't over exercise

Research shows that too much exercise can increase your chances of having a baby with low birth weight, which can lead to complications. It is recommended frequency of exercise should be no more than 3-4 times per week.

Remember to Rest and Recover

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Don't do abdominal exercises

It is important that as soon as you fall pregnant that you stop all abdominal exercises and only do bracing exercises. Abdominal exercises mainly work your outer-core muscles whereas the bracing technique will work your inner-core muscles which will support your baby and reduce the strain on your back.

Do Pelvic Floor Exercises

Pelvic floor muscles are essential for every female and so whether you are pregnant, thinking about pregnancy or have had children you should be doing pelvic floor exercises every day. We all know we should be doing them and we all at some stage have been slack with our exercises but during pregnancy is one of the most important times to start doing them as they will keep your pelvic muscles strong and recovery will be easier and faster after birth.

Ideal Pregnancy Exercises

Gone are the days where your only job as a pregnant woman was to sit still and incubate your baby. In 2011, research shows that women can safely participate in exercise throughout pregnancy and up to labour.

Below are some of the exercise you can participate in if you have no complications in your pregnancy.

- Walking
- Low impact aerobics
- Water aerobics
- Pregnancy exercise classes
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Light weight training (see your instructor for a specialised program)
- Personal training

Exercises to avoid during pregnancy

- Heavy weights
- Bouncing—including star jumps or similar exercise
- Contact sports
- Any activity/exercise that causes pain
- Excessive twisting or turning movements
- Exercise that require you to hold your breath
- Prolonged standing static exercise
- High cardio and choreographed exercise that involve changing direction suddenly
- Exercises that increase the curve in your lower back
- Excessive bouncing exercise that can overstretch the pelvic floor muscles.

Things to Remember:

Nothing should hurt

Exercise should be fun and make you feel good. At no stage should you feel any pain and if you do stop immediately and advise the instructor if you are in a class.

Overheating of your body

It is important that you don't overheat your body as this can take blood flow away from your baby reducing the fetal heartrate. It is also important that you don't exercise in high temperatures or high humidity and always take a drink bottle with you when exercising (even the pool) and wear layers that you can take off during exercise.

Rest periods during exercise

Another thing you should make sure you do during every workout is to have regular rest periods so that your body can recover, you can catch your breath and re-hydrate.

It is also important to have rest days between exercising and should only exercise 3-4 days per week.

Warm up and cool down

Whether you are pregnant or not it is important to exercise but it becomes increasingly important when you are pregnant as you have a hormone called relaxin running through your body that will loosen joints and can lead to strains and sprains from excessive exercise.

Stop exercising and seek medical advice if you experience any of the following:

- Dizziness, faintness, headaches, blurred vision, nausea or vomiting

- Any kind of pain or numbness
- Discomfort or excess fatigue after you have exercised
- Vaginal bleeding, contractions, leaking of amniotic fluid or reduced movements of your baby.

For some women, it is important to take care when exercising and you should talk to your doctor/ midwife before starting any exercise program. You should also check if:

- You have had a premature baby or a threatened miscarriage before
- You have severe anaemia (very low iron levels)
- Your baby has been small for dates during pregnancy
- You have pre-eclampsia or high blood pressure
- You are very overweight or underweight
- You have any problems with your joints or muscles
- You have heart or lung issues
- You are expecting twins
- You have diabetes

You should also not exercise AT ALL if:

- You have gone into premature labour or had a threatened miscarriage during your current pregnancy
- You have placenta praevia (low-lying placenta) after you are 25 weeks pregnant
- You have cervical weakness (also known as cervical incompetence)
- You are pregnant with multiple babies (three or more)
- You have a serious heart or lung disease
- You have persistent vaginal bleeding
- You have VERY high blood pressure (Artal et al 2003)

For more information on exercising through your pregnancy or what exercises are best for you please contact Katrina on 0413 861 118 or Katrina@playballfitness.com.au .