

How to Exercise Safely During Pregnancy

Should you exercise during pregnancy? The answer for most women with normal pregnancies is a resounding “yes!” Working out during pregnancy can lift your spirits, ease lower-back pain and other discomforts, improve your flexibility and build up your endurance for labor.

That doesn't mean you should sign up for a half-marathon, however. Non-weight-bearing activities like swimming, stationary cycling, calisthenics and stretching are the best choices for pregnant women. Brisk walking is another good option.

Experts recommend that pregnant women engage in 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most days of the week. The following are general guidelines to help expectant mothers get off to a safe start. Talk it over with your physician for any additional guidelines.

- **Steer clear of any activity that could hurt you or the fetus**, such as climbing or horseback riding.
- **After the first 20 weeks of pregnancy**, eliminate exercises that require you to lie on your back, as it could reduce blood flow to the fetus.
- **Warm up for at least five minutes before exercising** to prevent joint and muscle injuries.
- **Don't overstretch.** It can damage joints that have become loosened during pregnancy.
- **Avoid jumping, jarring or jerking movements**, which could throw you off balance.

Who Shouldn't Exercise

Anyone with one or more of the following risk factors should not exercise during pregnancy:

- **Pregnancy-induced high blood pressure**
- **Premature labor during the current pregnancy or a prior one**
- **Incompetent cervix**
- **Persistent second- or third-trimester bleeding**
- **Slow fetal growth**



- **Drink plenty of water** before, during and after working out.
- **Make sure you consume the extra 300 calories a day** you need during pregnancy.
- **You should be able to carry on a conversation when you exercise.** If you can't, you're exercising too strenuously.
- **Check your temperature during or right after exercising.** A body temperature above 102.6° F could harm the fetus. Avoid working out in hot, humid weather.
- **Stop exercising when you're comfortably tired;** don't wait till you're exhausted.
- **Cool down for at least five minutes after exercising**, then lie down on your left side for a few minutes. This position increases blood flow to the heart and the placenta.
- **If you experience pain**, bleeding, rupture of membranes, faintness, irregular heartbeat or dizziness, or if the baby stops moving, stop exercising immediately and call your doctor.
- **Have fun.** That's the best way to ensure that you'll continue your workouts.

Join Today!

Healthy Beginnings class at Northside Hospital teaches flexible fitness options for new and expectant moms. For more information or to register for classes, visit www.northside.com or call (404) 845-5555 and press 1.