

Exercise in pregnancy:

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Introduction:

Exercise is generally encouraged during pregnancy, and studies have shown that it is safe for both mom and fetus. The level of exercise you perform will depend on your pre-pregnancy exercise routine. Exercise will improve both your physical and psychological health e.g. improves posture and back-ache, relieves constipation, improved sleep and also accelerates post pregnancy weight loss. You should discuss your exercise routine with your doctor when you are pregnant, as modifications might be needed depending on your risk profile.

What are the benefits during the antepartum and postpartum period?

- Decrease fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression
- Decrease swelling
- Decrease length of labour and delivery complications
- Improved sleep
- Increased weight loss in postpartum period

Important points:

- Choose exercises that will not cause loss of balance and thus trauma to the fetus
- Commence pelvic floor exercises during your pregnancy and continue postpartum-decreases future risk of urinary incontinence
- aerobic and strength – conditioning exercises are encouraged
- Aqua aerobics - water temperature should not exceed 32 degrees Celsius
- Competitive athletes require special obstetric care

- Stop exercising if you experience- vaginal bleeding, shortness of breath, chest pain, leakage of water, uterine contractions and sudden abdominal pain etc.
- You might require supervision should you have a medical condition such as e.g. heart or lung disease, high blood pressure, previous preterm labour, heavy smoker, orthopaedic problems etc
- Postpartum exercise will not compromise the amount of breast milk
- Generally you can commence your exercise routine between 6-8 weeks postpartum (after your postpartum check)

Which exercises or sport should you avoid?

- Horseback riding
- Skiing
- Ice-hockey
- Gymnastics
- Cycling
- Scuba diving

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