

Pregnancy: How to Exercise



Exercise is good for healthy pregnant women. It can relieve back pain, swelling, and other discomforts of pregnancy. Exercise also prepares your muscles for childbirth, and it can improve your energy level and help you sleep better.

Try to do at least 2½ hours a week of moderate exercise. One way to do this is to be active 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. It's fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week. If you do not already exercise, be sure to talk with your doctor before you start a new exercise program. Try exercise classes for pregnant women. Doctors do not recommend contact sports or hard, tiring exercise during pregnancy.

If you exercised before getting pregnant, you should be able to stay with your same routine early in your pregnancy. That might include running and aerobics. Later, you may want to switch to swimming or walking.

What should you do at home?

Here are some ways to care for yourself.

- Eat a small snack or drink juice 15 to 30 minutes before you exercise.
- Eat a variety of foods to help get all the nutrients you need. Your body needs protein, carbohydrate, and fats for energy. You may need to eat a little more to get extra energy for exercise.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after exercise.
- If you are used to hard or intense exercise, pay attention to changes in your body that mean it is time to slow down.
- Try swimming and brisk walking.
- Get plenty of rest. You may be very tired while you are pregnant.

Be safe

Always talk with your doctor about the right kind of exercise for each stage of pregnancy. Listen to your body to know if you are exercising safely.

- Do not become overheated while you exercise.
- Do not get overtired while you exercise. You should be able to talk while you work out. If you feel tired, take it easy.
- Do not use saunas, steam rooms, or hot tubs while pregnant.
- Avoid contact sports, such as ice hockey, soccer, and basketball. Also avoid scuba diving and exercise in altitudes above 6,000 feet.
- After your fourth month of pregnancy, avoid exercises that require you to lie flat on your back on a hard surface. These include sit-ups and some yoga poses.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any questions about exercise and your baby.

Questions to ask your doctor

Use the space below to list your questions or concerns. Take this sheet with you to your next doctor visit.

Questions about exercise during pregnancy: