

Exercise and Weight Gain

There are many easy and safe ways to exercise throughout pregnancy to help you keep your body in shape, help circulate oxygen and prepare your body and baby for birth. Exercising is also a great way to help relieve:

- tension and stress
- depression
- cramping, low backache, ligament pain
- constipation
- leg pain/cramps
- varicosities
- fatigue
- congestion in the pelvis

Some exercises will help tone your muscles while others are good for cardio and getting oxygen to your muscles and blood, which also gets oxygenated blood to your baby. If you already have an exercise routine, you can still do most of the exercises you would normally do - modifying some, when necessary, to accommodate your growing baby and body. Your balance will be disrupted throughout pregnancy, but especially in the third trimester and you likely won't have as much energy and maneuverability.

Avoid doing exercises that cause even mild abdominal interaction or trauma and anything that causes you to hold your breath for any length of time. Oxygen is essential to you and your baby, remember to breathe very deep and slow to ensure you are both getting enough oxygen.



There are some things to keep in mind when planning out or beginning an exercise routine:

- avoid doing any exercises that require you to lay on your back
- be sure to eat enough nutritional foods to compensate for the burned calories
- drink plenty of water as you exercise and remember your salt intake to replace what has sweated out.
- regular exercise (min. 3 times a week) is preferred over intermittent exercise.
- Avoid sitting for long periods
- jumping, jarring or sudden movements should be avoided
- stretching is encouraged before and after your workout
- exercises shouldn't be performed if you have a temperature or fever.
- use caution when moving about and in transition from one exercise to another.

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Posture is also a concern for people during pregnancy, which is important because it can make a big difference in the amount of low back pain, indigestion and shortness of breath. Practicing good posture also helps baby to get into position for birth easier.

Finding what works for you may take some trial and getting used to, remember exercising should not be painful or cause concern.

Some suggested activities include:

- **Walking** - a very common and one of the best and easiest ways to get oxygen, stretch your muscles and ligaments and can be done almost anywhere.
- **Yoga** - pregnant yoga classes and videos are becoming much more common and are very good for helping mamas to stretch, get oxygen and move slowly.
- **Swimming** - swimming is great with the weightless feeling in the water and the nice arm and leg workout - not to mention the lung exercising!!
- **Stretching** - careful not to lay on your back after the first trimester, stretching while laying on your side, or in a sitting or kneeling position is very beneficial and easy to do.
- **Squatting** - there are a few different types of squats that are very helpful to your pelvic floor and the rest of your body:
 - the yogic squat
 - the butterfly pose
 - "wall" squats
 - standard squats (with support after the first trimester)

Finding a group or class that practices exercises for pregnant people in your area is also a good way to socialize while you exercise - which is also a great workout for your mind!

Weight Gain

During pregnancy, a weight gain of 35 to 45 pounds is normal and expected. Some people gain more, some less. Not every person or every pregnancy, will be the same. The focus for pregnancy should not be so heavily on the weight gain as the types of foods you are eating and how frequently you are eating. If you are getting a balanced, nutritional diet daily (eating small meals every few hours with a balance of nutrients) and drinking plenty of fluids, your baby and body will grow and show in your prenatal visits and daily life that you are doing well.

There are some health factors that can contribute to special situations and may require a bit more assistance. By staying in contact with your midwife and communicating any situations or topics of concern during prenatal appointments, you can work together to determine what, if anything can or will be done.

If you have any questions about exercises or weight gain throughout your pregnancy, please chat with your midwife and ensure that you get all the information you need.

Books:

The Natural Pregnancy Book by Aviva Jill Romm

Ina May's Guide to Childbirth by Ina May Gaskin

Having a Baby, Naturally by Peggy O'Mara

References

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