

# Quick Questions

If you're feeling clueless about how to stay active when you're expecting, read on...

## Q How Much Exercise Is The Right Amount in Pregnancy?

If you didn't exercise regularly before pregnancy, start with 15 minutes three times per week. You can increase it to 30 minutes four times per week, then daily.

If you exercised regularly before pregnancy, you're fine to carry on with the same fitness routine that you did before. As pregnancy continues you should aim to gradually reduce it but get some advice from your midwife or doctor about how to do that.

## Q Can Pregnancy Exercise Harm My Baby?

As long as you stick to the advice, exercising in pregnancy will not harm your baby. Keep your training to a moderate intensity level, exclude high-impact jolting/jarring activities and avoid lying on your back after 16 weeks. Make sure you stay safe and you will be good to go. In fact, exercising during pregnancy can actually be good for your baby and good for you.

Remember, pregnancy can be a stressful time; depression, anxiety, work commitments, financial worries or relationship concerns can all negatively affect your pregnancy and the experience of having a baby. Physical activity is proven to reduce stress and anxiety and to have a positive effect on mental health – this may be what you are needing from exercise.

## Q Are There Any Differences to Exercising when I'm Pregnant from Normal?

Apart from the obvious extra weight with the small human that's accompanying you on your run, there is another important difference. When you're pregnant your joints may become looser and you may be able to bend more than usual – but don't overdo it and strain something!

Hormonal changes affect the ligaments that support the joints ready for when you give birth. This means you're at increased

# About Exercising During Pregnancy



risk of injury and have a higher chance of spraining or straining your muscles. So be careful.

## Q Is There Anything Else I Need to Know About Exercise During Pregnancy?

Yes. Always listen to your own body and adapt any exercise as necessary to make it safe for pregnancy. Don't just assume you can do the same as before. If you're at a class, make sure the person leading it is fully qualified and aware that you are pregnant. You might need some tweaks to the exercises to make them safe for your pregnancy.

## Q Are There Any Red Flags that Mean I Should Stop Exercising?

Yes. Make sure you stop exercising and get urgent medical attention if you develop any of the following:

- excessive shortness of breath before you've even exerted yourself;
- chest pains or palpitations;
- dizziness or feeling faint;
- painful contractions, signs of labour or leaking amniotic fluid;
- vaginal bleeding;
- excessive tiredness;
- abdominal, pelvic or back pain;
- severe headache;
- muscle weakness;
- calf pain or swelling;
- concerns that your baby is moving less; or
- pain in the front or back of your pelvic girdle – pain anywhere from the lower spine or abdomen down to the thigh.

### Then Tick off This Checklist.

- ☐ Speak to your midwife or healthcare professional before starting any exercise during pregnancy
- ☐ Eat before exercise and immediately afterwards too
- ☐ Warm up before exercise and cool down afterwards
- ☐ Keep well hydrated
- ☐ Try to maintain a good posture
- ☐ Don't exercise to exhaustion
- ☐ Don't exercise when it's hot or you're feeling unwell
- ☐ Don't exercise on your back after 16 weeks as your bump could press on the main blood vessel bringing blood to your heart and can make you feel faint
- ☐ Don't exercise if you have pelvic pain or blood spotting
- ☐ Don't exercise if you're having a lot of Braxton Hicks contractions
- ☐ Don't bump your bump – certain activities like contact and high-impact sport can pose potential dangers
- ☐ Always check with your midwife or healthcare professional if you have any concerns

Your physical therapist can guide you through this and give you advice on what aerobic exercises may be good for you and how to monitor your exercise intensity. They can also prescribe you specific strengthening exercises to help alleviate back pain and/or prepare your body for delivery. The fitter and stronger you are will make you labour easier and your recovery faster!

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