

Fitness

Files



PREGNANCY IN EXERCISE

Artal, R., & O' Toole, M. (2002). *Guidelines of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists for exercise during pregnancy and the postpartum period.*

Research clearly states that moderate levels of physical activity by healthy, well-nourished women pose no special risk to pregnancy. Women who exercise moderately and regularly tend to experience fewer of the normal discomforts of pregnancy and benefit from the sense of well-being regular exercise can bring. Symptoms, such as nausea, fatigue, and back pain have been reported to decrease as well as improvements in self-esteem and other psychological parameters.

Prenatal Exercise

The overall health, obstetric and medical risks should be reviewed before a pregnant woman is prescribed an exercise programme. In the absence of contraindications, a pregnant woman should be encouraged to engage in regular, moderate intensity exercise to continue to derive the same associated health benefits during pregnancy as before pregnancy. However, there are contraindications to exercise because of pre-existing or developing medical conditions, and pregnancy is not different. In addition, certain obstetric complications may develop in pregnant women regardless of the previous level of fitness, which could preclude them from continuing to exercise safely during pregnancy.

If you have previously been inactive, non-weight bearing activities like swimming and stationary cycling pose the least risk of injury, and moderate walking is also safe for most. A schedule of one 20-30 minute moderate intensity exercise session daily at a comfortable pace is a reasonable goal. Regular participation in moderate intensity strength training will also help to maintain flexibility and muscle tone while minimising the risk of ligament and joint injury. Lifting of heavy weights should be avoided, except under proper prescription and supervision.

Active women, in the absence of any complications, can continue to exercise in accustomed ways at close to pre-pregnancy levels. Participation in a full range of activities and sports such as tennis, are generally safe, but contact sports and scuba diving should be

avoided, as well as any activity with the potential for causing abdominal trauma.

Exercise Do's and Do not's

Do's

- Do inform a senior trainer/supervisor that you are pregnant so that they can make adjustments to your programme for the duration of your pregnancy. Ideally, book an appointment at reception to review your programme and/or goals.
- Do exercise moderately and regularly unless otherwise advised by your health care provider.
- Do wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing that allows heat to escape and moisture to evaporate.
- Do drink plenty of fluids during exercise; eat appropriately.
- Do consume a healthy diet and gain weight as recommended.
- Do exercise at 50 to 60 percent of maximal heart rate (or VO2 max). Ratings of perceived exertion are a useful way to monitor exercise intensity. For moderate exercise, ratings of perceived exertion should be 6-7 (somewhat hard) on 1-10 scale.

Do not's

- Don't exercise or perform physical work to exhaustion. Stop when you feel tired.
- Don't exercise while lying on your back in the second or third trimester.
- Don't exercise in hot, humid conditions.
- Don't perform activities that may traumatise the abdomen or uterus or cause you to lose your balance.
- Don't fast or exercise while you are hungry.

If you experience any of the above, you need to consult with your primary care provider prior to continuing your exercise programme.

Postpartum exercise

Many of the physiological and morphological (body shape) changes of pregnancy persist for four to six weeks postpartum. Thus, exercise routines may be resumed only gradually after pregnancy and should be individualised. Exercise can thus be resumed as soon as physically and medically safe. This will certainly vary from one woman to another, with some being capable of engaging in an exercise routine within days of delivery.

If you have any questions pertaining to health, fitness, BodyTech membership, please do not hesitate in contacting BodyTech.

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