

## Exercise During Pregnancy

### Overview

#### What are the benefits of exercise during pregnancy?

Exercise is good for you during a healthy pregnancy. It can help relieve back pain, swelling, and other discomforts. It can help with energy and sleep. And it prepares your muscles for childbirth. Exercise can also help reduce the risk of having diabetes and high blood pressure during pregnancy, [preeclampsia, Opens dialog](#), and cesarean birth.

#### How can you stay safe?

If you exercised before getting pregnant, you will probably be able to stay with your same routine early in your pregnancy. But everyone's experience is different. Here are some tips for how to stay safe while staying active during pregnancy.

- Don't exercise to lose weight.
  - Talk with your doctor or midwife about the right kind of exercise for each stage of pregnancy.
  - Do not start a new or more strenuous exercise program without first checking with your doctor or midwife.
- Listen to your body.
  - If you are used to hard or intense exercise, ask your doctor how to know when it's time to slow down.
  - Be extra careful when you do any activity that could make you lose your balance. You may feel off-balance as your body changes with pregnancy.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
  - Drink fluids before, during, and after exercise.
- Be careful.
  - Don't get overheated while you exercise.
  - Avoid exercising in hot weather or if you're not feeling well.
  - Do not get overtired. You should be able to talk while you exercise. If you feel tired, take it easy.

- After your fourth month of pregnancy, avoid exercises that require you to lie flat on your back on a hard surface. This includes sit-ups and some yoga poses.
- Avoid contact sports such as basketball. Also avoid other risky activities, such as water-skiing, scuba diving, and horseback or motorcycle riding.
- Avoid exercising at a high altitude (above 6,000 feet). If you live in a place with a high altitude, talk to your doctor about how you can exercise safely.

### **What types of exercise are recommended?**

Activities that are recommended during pregnancy include:

- [Moderate exercise, Opens dialog](#), like brisk walking or swimming. Try to do at least 2½ hours of moderate activity a week. 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 shorter periods of time throughout your day and week that add up to the recommended goals.
- Stretching and strengthening exercises, such as forward bends and pelvic tilts. Try a prenatal exercise class, like prenatal yoga. But avoid hot yoga.
- Kegel exercises. These strengthen your [pelvic floor muscles, Opens dialog](#).

Moderate exercise is safe for most pregnancies. But talk with your doctor before you start a new exercise program.

If you were active before getting pregnant, you should be able to stay with your same routine early in pregnancy. Later, you may want to switch to more gentle activities.

### **What if you can't exercise during pregnancy?**

It's okay if you can't exercise because of a complication of your pregnancy or an existing condition. It won't cause problems for your baby. And you may be able to do some simple exercises, with your doctor's approval. Talk with your doctor about what's safe and possible for you.