



EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY GUIDE

Welcome to the workoutlikeamum guide to Exercising during pregnancy. I have tried to include as much information as possible for you to be able to adapt and plan your exercise routines during your pregnancy. If there is anything you're not sure about or would like further information / specific advice, please contact me on workoutlikeamum@yahoo.com or 07870589272.

Benefits of Exercising while pregnant

In the past people have avoided exercising during pregnancy as they have been worried it will be harmful to their babies whereas guidelines now encourage it throughout pregnancy for many reasons.....

Exercise during pregnancy can prevent or reduce a lot of unpleasant pregnancy symptoms such as back pain, limbs swelling, nausea, leg cramps, fatigue, Pregnancy induced hypertension, varicose veins, Insomnia, Diastasis Recti (separation of ab muscles), Anxiety, Depression, Gestational Imbalance and much more!

Exercise can also Increase or Improve: posture, fitness, muscular strength & endurance, energy levels and core strength. These improvements will all help you to prepare your body for birth and can also improve recovery after the birth. In fact, one study found that active women had a 30% shorter labour.

Safe Exercise During pregnancy

There are lots of myths around exercising in pregnancy which cause people to worry and avoid exercise. Exercise should not cause premature labour, waters to break early or miscarriage. And you can exercise during your 1st Trimester. Exercising during pregnancy is generally safe but there are still potential risks which can be reduced by following some safe exercise guidelines

- Avoid over-heating during exercise. To do this: keep hydrated, wear comfortable loose clothes and don't do strenuous exercise in hot weather
- Wear supportive footwear
- Wear a supportive bra
- Eat a Balanced Diet. You and your baby need Carbohydrates while pregnant. Make sure you have carbohydrates in your meals after exercise to replenish stores, so you don't deprive your baby of Carbohydrate supply for their growth. A pre-exercise snack is advised as well so that your blood sugar levels don't drop.
- Listen to your body and if you re feeling tired, unwell or generally weak then rest
- Keep hydrated
- If you are attending exercise classes, ensure that your instructor is qualified to train you, and knows how many weeks pregnant you are. Let them know if you have any discomfort or unusual symptoms while in the class.
- There are also some adaptations / changes you will need to make as your pregnancy progresses which are covered in more detail further on in this guide.

When not to Exercise

Sometimes there are conditions that mean it becomes unsafe to exercise. This next section is to inform you so that you are aware. A lot of the conditions and situations listed below are very unlikely if you are fit & well, but it is important to understand so that you are safe when exercising throughout pregnancy.

If any of the below apply to you, you **must not** exercise during pregnancy:

- Heart Disease
- Lung Disease
- Incompetent cervix
- Multiple Gestations
- Persistent bleeding
- Placenta Praevia
- Premature Labour
- Waters have broken
- Hypertension / Pre-eclampsia

There also some conditions that may put you or baby at risk. If any of the following apply to you, you should **seek medical advice** prior to exercising:

- Severe Anaemia
- Maternal Cardiac Arrhythmia
- Chronic Bronchitis
- Poorly controlled Type 1 or 2 diabetes
- Gestational diabetes
- BMI 40+
- BMI less than 12
- Sedentary lifestyle - not exercised before
- Poor growth of Foetus
- Orthopaedic Limitations (Skeletal, muscular, joints or ligaments that effect physical activity)
- Epilepsy
- Heavy Smoker

While you are exercising if you experience any of the following you should **stop exercising** and seek medical advice prior to carrying out any more exercise:

- Pelvic Pain
- Abdominal Pain
- Severe headaches / dizziness
- Decreased baby movement
- Persistent Contractions
- Vaginal Bleeding
- Inflamed calf
- Sudden swelling of ankles, face & Hands
- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath prior to exertion

Exercise to avoid during Pregnancy

During Pregnancy there are certain exercises and sports that will put you and your baby at too much risk so should be avoided. They are:

- Exercise that requires **high degree of balance / agility** or where there's a **risk of falling** (e.g. Horse riding, skiing, ice skating, ice hockey, gymnastics, cycling, white water rafting, kayaking, surfing, bungee)
- **Contact Sports** where there's a risk of getting hit (e.g. kickboxing, judo, squash, racquet sports, football, basketball, volleyball)
- Don't go scuba diving
- Don't exercise at altitudes over 2,500m above sea level (e.g. rock climbing, sky diving, skiing, snow barding. Mountain biking)

Exercise During Pregnancy

Exercising during pregnancy should be focused on staying fit rather than trying to achieve peak performance. The main rule around exercise intensity during pregnancy is not to exceed the levels of intensity that you've worked at prior to pregnancy. If you've not exercised regularly before and are now pregnant and wanting to exercise it's best to check with your doctor that you're safe to exercise and there are no underlying problems. Then follow an exercise programme at beginner level throughout the pregnancy. 15-20 mins of exercise 3 times a week would be the right kind of intensity.

As you progress through the trimesters of your pregnancy, you will need to make some adaptations:

Trimester 1

You can get **sore breasts** due to all of the pregnancy hormones. This will make lying on your front very uncomfortable, and high intensity jumping around (e.g. squat jumps, star jumps etc) can feel uncomfortable for you too. Avoid both if this is the case.

Nausea: If you're suffering with morning sickness exercise can help to improve symptoms. Try and plan to exercise at a time of day where you feel least sick. Only exercise if the nausea is under control and avoid too high an intensity of exercise as that may make you feel worse.

Trimester 2

From 16 weeks until after birth **don't lie on your back**. The weight of your bump will press on main blood vessels bringing blood back to the heart which can make you faint.

It's important to **keep moving** during your exercise sessions and not to stop and sit down or stand still in between exercises. If you stay still this could cause blood pooling.

Trimester 3

Your **Balance** will not be as good as your pregnancy progresses and the bump grows. As you enter the last Trimester make sure you are using **extra support** in your exercises to improve stability. Below are 2 ways to do this:

- Do exercises seated when possible (e.g. seated shoulder press instead of stood up)
- Use a chair or wall for support

Your bump will now mean it is **harder to use certain equipment**. For example, lifting a barbell in a deadlift will not work as you would knock your bump. So, adapt your exercises, and replace barbells with Dumbbells for example. You may have to stop using certain machines if you go to the gym as they become uncomfortable to use as your bump gets in the way. You can easily do a free weight exercise instead that could work the same muscle groups. Ask a PT who is qualified in Pre-natal exercise to help you with alternatives if you aren't sure.

How to adapt your programme through the trimesters

Changes / adaptations to make to your exercise programme throughout your pregnancy:

- Focus on Good Posture
- Avoid extreme rotation of spine
- Avoid rapid change in direction or of your position as you'll be more prone to dizziness during pregnancy due to various reasons depending on the Trimester you're in
- Don't go beyond 80% of MHR (Max heart rate) or exercise for over 90 minutes. MHR is calculated by taking your age away from 220. For example, a 30-year old's MHR is $220 - 30 = 190$ bpm. 80% of this is 152 bpm. So, if you're 30 avoid both letting your Heart rate go above 152 bpm and/or exercising for 90 minutes or more.

Warm-up

Always warm up - increasing the time spent on this as your pregnancy progresses. Start with at least 5 mins in Trimester 1 and steadily increase so that by Trimester 3 you do a 10-15-minute warm-up

Cardiovascular exercise

Some ideal forms of cardio exercise while pregnant are walking and swimming as they don't put as much pressure on the joints as running would do for example. Walking is great as it's free and you can do it anywhere. If you have any friends going through a pregnancy at the same time, try and arrange to meet regularly to walk together to keep each motivated to get out and do it.

As your pregnancy progresses reduce both the length of time you do your CV for and the intensity. You will still be working as hard because as your pregnancy progresses your baby and bump put extra demands on your body.

If you go to the gym you can use the following CV machines in the 3 trimesters:

Trimester 1: Treadmill, Upright & Recumbent Cycle, Cross Trainer, Stepper, Rowing Machine

Trimester 2: Treadmill, Upright & Recumbent Cycle, Cross Trainer

Trimester 3: Treadmill, Upright & Recumbent Cycle (only if not knocking your bump when cycling)

Strength Training

If you are lifting weights in your exercise routine, then you will need to gently decrease the weights as your pregnancy develops as follows:

Trimester 1 - keep at pre-pregnancy weight (don't make any increases)

Trimester 2 first half - reduce by 5%

Trimester 2 second half - reduce by a further 5-10%

Trimester 3 - reduce by a further 5-10%

Core

Your core is the area where the biggest changes will happen during your pregnancy. As your bump grows it will affect your posture and can lead to back pain. Including some specific core training in your training will help to improve your posture and reduce or even prevent back pain. The following exercises can be done during your pregnancy but please note that Abdominal curls and Lying Pelvic tilts are only safe to do in your 1st Trimester:

- Gentle Abdominal curl (1st Trimester only)
- Pelvic Tilts (These can be done lying down 1st Trimester only, for 2nd and 3rd do them stood up)
- Pelvic Floor exercises (while doing these do not hold your breath, tilt your pelvis or tense your buttocks)

- Abdominal Hollowing (this can be done standing, sitting or 4 pt kneeling for 2nd & 3rd Trimester when you can't lie on your back)

For guidance on how to perform the core exercises either use the link to the NHS guide in the section at the end of this or I can take you through the exercises if you contact me directly.

Stretching

When pregnant your body starts to release the hormone Relaxin which causes joint laxity. So, it's important to follow the following stretching guidelines to avoid injury:

- Avoid stretching beyond your normal range
- Don't hold stretches for more than 8-15 secs
- Don't hold your breath while stretching

Useful Websites:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pregnancy-exercise/>