

EXERCISE IN PREGNANCY

An exercise program during pregnancy is good for you and your baby. American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends a goal of moderate-intensity exercise for at least 20-30 minutes per day most days during pregnancy. However, many women think exercise is harmful for the baby and either decrease exercise significantly, or stop all together.

Myths about Exercise in Pregnancy:

- “It’s dangerous for the baby”
- “Walking is the only safe exercise”
- “Exercise dangerously changes the baby’s heart rate”
- “Exercise reduces blood flow to the baby”

Truths about Exercise in Pregnancy:

- There are no risks to the baby with mild to moderate physical activity. Actually, exercise during pregnancy helps by:
 - Reduces risk for gestational diabetes by increasing insulin sensitivity and overall glucose control
 - Reduces the need for insulin injections in women who have gestational diabetes
 - Improves cardiovascular function
 - Reduces blood pressure
 - Reduces leg swelling
 - Strengthens pelvic floor muscles and posture
 - Lowers stress and anxiety
 - Improves self-image
 - Improves sleep
 - Reduces risk for overgrowth of the baby
 - Reduces risk for childhood metabolic syndrome for the baby
 - Reduces risk for lifetime cardiovascular disease & cancer

- Participation in a wide range of exercise is safe. See list below for safe examples:

Safe Aerobic Exercises	Safe Strength Exercise
Walking	Lifting weights
Swimming	Resistance bands
Stationary bike	Stability balls
Elliptical	Prenatal pilates
Step aerobics	Prenatal yoga
Moderate hiking	
Running/jogging	
Dancing	
Climbing stairs	

- There are some exercises that women should not do when pregnant. See the list below for **UNSAFE** exercises:

Unsafe Aerobic Exercises
Risk for abdominal trauma: soccer, baseball, etc.
Risk for falls: gymnastics, downhill skiing, box jump, rope climb
Excessive bouncing/jerking: horseback riding, mountain biking

- According to ACOG, there are some conditions with which women should not exercise, such as: incompetent cervix/cerclage, multiple gestation at risk for pre-mature labor, placenta previa after 26 weeks, preeclampsia. Please discuss with your physician to see if you have any restrictions.

When starting any new exercise regimen, you should slowly build up to your moderate intensity level. Use the Talk Test reference below.

Talk Test:

A talk test is one of the best ways to assess intensity of exercise in pregnancy. Maintain an intensity of exercise where you are able to carry on a light conversation comfortably. If you have difficulty catching your breath, or are unable to talk, you are most likely exceeding safe exercise intensity. If this occurs, slow down, catch your breath, and resume activity at a more moderate pace.