

Exercise in pregnancy

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Remember, the information on this fact sheet should not be used or relied on as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see your health care professional.

Being pregnant for 40 or so weeks is a physical challenge! The fitter you are to begin with, the better - but it is never too late to start.

Being fit will help make your pregnancy much more enjoyable, assist you during labour, and help you cope better with the demands of a young baby. However, it is best to talk to your doctor or midwife at the beginning of your pregnancy to discuss what exercise is suitable for you.

What type of exercise is suitable during pregnancy?

The basic rule is to listen to your body and don't overdo it.

- Activities that are especially suitable during pregnancy include moderate intensity walking, swimming, dancing, stationary cycling and gentle stretching such as prenatal yoga or pilates.
- Gently developing your core muscle strength will help your body manage the changes of pregnancy and some of the discomforts such as backache, joint strain and pelvic loosening. Feeling stronger in your body will help you feel good in yourself.
- If you have been exercising prior to pregnancy you may need to change the way you do some things.

- It is not a good idea to take up strenuous sports such as outdoor cycling, tennis or jogging, especially if you have never done them before. If you have been involved in these types of activities before you were pregnant, have a chat to your doctor or midwife about how long and how vigorously you should continue with these sports.

For more information on exercise and pregnancy have a look at the detailed information on 'Exercise in Pregnancy' (pdf) on the Sports Medicine Australia website.

How to make physical activity part of your daily life

The recent guidelines from the Active Australia Campaign offer helpful ways to make physical activity a part of your daily life.

Think of movement as an opportunity not an inconvenience

Modern technology has reduced the need for even small amounts of physical activity in our daily lives. Yet the human body was designed to move. As we become less active, we become more overweight and experience more health problems. Start thinking of any type of movement as a way you can improve your health.

Be active every day in as many ways as you can

Being active in small ways is likely to provide health advantages to almost everyone - whatever their age, body weight, health condition or disability.

Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days (the more days the better).

Moderate intensity activity includes things such as a brisk walk or medium paced swimming. Use the 'Talk test' - you should be able to have a conversation while you are exercising.

Combine short sessions of different activities of around 10 to 15 minutes each to a total of 30 minutes or more. You don't need to do all 30 minutes in one go.

If you have checked with your doctor or obstetrician, you may also be able to enjoy some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness.

Your doctor, midwife or a physiotherapist can provide you with more information about exercising during pregnancy.

For more information about the health benefits of being active have a look at the Healthy Active Australia website.



An Australian Government Initiative

For more information on this topic or any issues related to pregnancy, birth or babies, call the free 24 hour helpline:

1800 882 436



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