

Sport and Exercise during Pregnancy

If you are healthy and your pregnancy is normal, you can continue to exercise during your pregnancy. There are positive benefits to be derived from aerobic and strength conditioning exercise during pregnancy, and there is no evidence that exercise during your pregnancy increases the risk to your pregnancy or your unborn baby. There are certain circumstances, detailed below, when you should consult your G.P. or Obstetrician before embarking on a new exercise regime or continuing with your current exercise programme.

- Serious heart, lung kidney or thyroid disease
- Pre-eclampsia
- Rupture of membranes (waters broken)
- Diabetes, Type 1 or 2
- Epilepsy
- Previous history of miscarriage or premature labour
- Low or high blood pressure
- Placenta praevia
- Infection
- Asthma
- Vaginal bleeding
- Reduced baby movement
- Anemia
- Shortness of breath before exercising
- If you are under, over weight or suffer from an eating disorder

or if you have a medical condition, not listed above, that you feel needs medical guidance.

It is recommended that pregnant women avoid,

- Activities that may lead to a loss of balance or faetal trauma
- Horse riding
- Skiing
- Ice hockey
- Gymnastics
- Impact sports
- Cycling

You should stop exercising immediately, and seek medical advice, if you experience any of the following,

- Vaginal bleeding
- Shortness of breath or dizziness
- Chest pain
- Tummy, calf or severe joint pain, especially in the low back or pelvis
- Rupture of membranes (waters breaking)
- A reduction in your babies movements
- Headache
- Excessive swelling of joints or calf muscle

General Exercise Advice

The following is a **guide** to exercising during pregnancy. Exercise during pregnancy should only be undertaken to maintain, or slightly improve your level of fitness.

A generally accepted way to establish how hard you should be working during your exercise regime is the 'talk test'. At this pace you should be able to exercise and still be able to comfortably hold a conversation. As your pregnancy develops you will find that you need to reduce your exercise intensity in order to sustain the required pace.

Guidelines published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists recommends a 30 minute exercise regime between four to seven days a week. If you are not used to exercising you should build up gradually, starting with 15 minute sessions three times a week, gradually working towards the 30 minute, four – seven days a week, recommended level.

The benefits of exercising include a reduction in the following

- feelings of tiredness
- difficulty sleeping
- arm and leg swelling
- varicose veins
- stress and anxiety

aswell as helping to maintain your fitness level, exercise will help you to maintain a healthy body weight .There is also evidence to suggest that exercise during pregnancy can reduce the length of your labour, and the risk of complications.

Above all, it is important that you listen to your body, if you feel unwell or experience any problems listed above contact your doctor, midwife or physiotherapist.

So, why see a Women's Health Physiotherapist

Sally, our Womens Health Physiotherapist, has additional qualifications, training and experience in women's health. She will work with you, using her traditional physiotherapy skills, and her specialist knowledge of the changes that are taking place during your pregnancy. Together you will formulate an individual exercise regime. As your pregnancy progresses you will have the knowledge and specialist support you need to maintain an appropriate fitness level and body weight. A fitter, healthier you, will improve your ability to cope with rest your pregnancy and delivery, and, make you stronger to take on the additional challenges that your new baby will bring.