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# Little Guide to Activity and Eating During Pregnancy

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## Benefits of Exercise During Pregnancy

You may not feel like it when you are pregnant, and are starting to feel slightly out of proportion, but exercise is really very good for you and your baby. You won't be running any marathons by any means, but you will benefit from any exercise that your doctor allows you to do. Did you know that, when you are pregnant, the recommendation for exercise is 30 minutes a day of moderate exercising?

If you were exercising before you became pregnant, talk to your doctor about continuing on that same program. And if you haven't been on a regular program before you became pregnant, talk with your doctor on how to get started.

Some of the benefits include, but are not limited to the following;

- You will feel better by increasing your energy level.
- The muscles in your back, butt and thighs will be strengthened and relieve you of back pain you have
- Regular exercise can prevent you from being constipated
- Exercising activates the lubricant called synovial fluid in your joints.
- You will sleep better because your exercising relieves your body of stress and anxiety.
- When you exercise, your blood flow in your body is increased, giving you a healthy glow.
- Exercising prepares your body for childbirth and the long road that may be ahead during labor and delivery
- If you exercise during pregnancy, it will be easier to regain your shape after delivery.

Under the supervision of your doctor, you may be able to enjoy benefits from the following exercises:

- Dancing
- Swimming
- Water aerobics
- Riding bicycle



- Going for a walk

Yoga and pilates are perfect for your exercise program during pregnancy. They are low impact and help develop your strength, flexibility, and help you to relax

If you develop the following symptoms, it means your body is trying to tell you to slow down.

- Feeling really tired
- Feeling dizzy
- Your heart pounding in your chest
- Being short of breath
- Back or pelvic pain

Keep in mind that as your pregnancy advances, your body shape will change and so will your sense of balance. So, keep in touch with your doctor about your routine. Also, if you find yourself unable to talk while you do your exercises, slow down. Keep your heart rate below 160 beats per minute.

Any way you look at it, no matter what kind of exercises you are allowed by your doctor to do, you will benefit in some way or another. You will feel proud of yourself for having the self discipline after the baby is born and you are back on your feet again with a little more energy than you would have if you had not done any exercises. Just make sure that you take enough breaks, and drink plenty of water.



## Exercising Restrictions During Pregnancy

Almost all medical professionals will agree that exercising while pregnant is very good for you and provides a variety of benefits. There are, however, some exercises that should be avoided.

After the first trimester, weight lifting and sit ups are not recommended. Lifting weights reduces the blood flow to your kidneys and uterus, which decreases the blood supply to your baby. Instead of doing sit-ups to tone your abdomen, get down on all fours to tighten and release your abdomen muscles as you exhale.

The following exercises should be avoided unless your doctor instructs you differently.

- An exercise that requires you to bounce
- An exercise that has a lot of up and down movements
- An exercise that forces you to leap
- An exercise that will make you take sudden changes in direction
- An exercise that may cause any risk to the abdomen.

Your doctor may also limit you on the following:

- Sports involving physical contact
- Skiing downhill
- Scuba diving
- Riding horses

Step aerobics is accepted only if you can lower your step as you progress in your pregnancy. If you do continue with aerobics, remember to not do them to the point of exhaustion or becoming short of breath.



The following symptoms are signs from your body that something is not quite right. Please pay attention to your body as it speaks to you.

- Spotting or Bleeding from the vagina
- Pain that is unusual for you
- Being dizzy or lightheaded
- Becoming short of breath
- Pain in your chest or fast heart palpitations
- Leaking fluid from your vagina
- Contractions in the uterus

After permission from your doctor to exercise, start slowly at 5 minutes and gradually increase your time. Eat snacks, drink plenty of water and avoid getting dehydrated. Dress comfortably, including wearing a bra that will give good support to your breasts. If you get sick, do not exercise that day. On a hot day, walk in an air conditioned building. And most importantly, if your body is trying to tell you something, you need to listen to it.

## **What Activities to Avoid During Pregnancy**

Day to day life is challenging enough but when you add pregnancy to that mix, your body may undergo a major workout without visiting a gym. And you end up with a back ache, morning sickness (sometimes lasting all day), and exhaustion.

Before you end up exhausted and sore, here are some activities that should be avoided during your pregnancy.

### Eliminate as much fatigue as much as possible

Don't let fatigue overwhelm you. Instead, find out what part of the day is the best for you and do your job or activities that require the most energy or the most concentration. When you start to feel fatigue coming on, get up and walk around a little to reactivate your muscles and blood flow. Walking can also work for de-stressing yourself when you do take the time to relax.



### Cut back on your commitments

Most of us have extra activities and commitments outside of our work place or home. This would normally be a good thing. But during your pregnancy this may be a good time to cut back and take that time to get some rest. Right now is when you need to make your commitment to yourself and your baby.

### Don't try to be wonder woman

Remember she was only a fictional character. If you are blessed with friends, relatives, or other co-workers that really care and want to help, don't turn their offers of help away. Instead, consider yourself truly blessed and allow them to help you. You may think that you are burdening them, but it is probably quite the opposite. Most people do not volunteer unless they really want to help. It makes them feel good to do things for others. So if you have storm windows to put on, a lawn to be mowed or snow to be removed, a house that needs cleaning, or errands to run, for goodness sake, allow others to help. That's what keeps us all in touch with one another.

### Don't let your job get you down

If you have a job that requires any of the following working conditions, you may need a little understanding from your boss, or a note from your doctor to get you through your pregnancy while still holding down employment.

- If you have to do any constant heavy lifting
- If you have to do any standing for long periods of time
- If you have to deal with or be around any heavy duty machines that cause vibrations
- If you are enduring lots of stress from commuting long distances to and from work
- If you are afraid of being exposed to harmful chemicals
- If you endure lots of heat while working
- If your job requires a good sense of balance
- If you have a job that requires different shift changes, you will not get proper rest.



All of these things in this report will cause fatigue, or add to your already aching body. You can't fully escape certain conditions during pregnancy, but you can learn what types of activities need to be avoided to help maintain your health.

## How Much Weight Should I Gain?

Whether you want to admit it or not, you will gain weight during pregnancy. It is necessary for your baby's growth and development. But just how much weight you gain is going to be a factor in how easy it will be to take the pounds off after the baby is born.

### One size does not fit all

How much weight you need to gain will be up to you and your doctor. There are some general guidelines to follow:

- If you are somewhat underweight, your total recommended weight gain should be about 28-40 pounds.
- If you fall into the normal weight category, your recommended weight gain should be about 25-35 pounds.
- If you are somewhat overweight your weight gain may fall into the 15-25 pound range.
- If you are obese, your range of weight gain may be about 15 pounds.
- If you are pregnant with more than one child, your weight gain will be more.

### Gaining the weight

For those that suffer from morning sickness it is a good thing to know that not much weight needs to be gained during the first trimester. If you are starting out at healthy weight, your calorie intake should increase by 150- 200 calories. That doesn't necessarily mean potato chip and candy bar calories. It means healthy calories from fruit, veggies, and dairy products such as low fat yogurt.



### Being underweight

If you started out your pregnancy underweight, your daily calorie intake may need to be increased by 300-500 calories. You will need the extra weight to prevent your baby from being born earlier than the due date.

### Being overweight

Being overweight before your pregnancy can bring on some health issues such as high blood pressure or gestational diabetes. But going on a diet now is not an option. You will need to gain a little extra weight or your body may start to break down its own storage of fat and create substances called ketones, which can be very harmful to the baby.

### Accounting for the extra pounds

For example, if your baby should weigh around 7-8 pounds, below is where the rest of the weight comes from.

- Baby = 7-8 pounds
- Increased breast size = 1-3 pounds
- Increase in uterus = 2 pounds
- Placenta = 1-2 pounds
- Fluid surrounding baby = 2 pounds
- Increase in blood supply = 3- pounds
- Fluid build up = 2-3 pounds
- Storage of fat = 6-8 pounds

Making a total of 24-32 pounds weight gain

The main point here is that weight gain is inevitable. And it is important that you keep an open communication with your doctor. He or she will be the guide to help you monitor your weight.



## What Foods to Avoid During Pregnancy

You are probably fully aware of what kinds of food you need to eat during your pregnancy. But did you also know that what you don't eat at this time can be just as important?

### Fish

While it's true that fish is an excellent source for iron, protein, and omega 3 fatty acids, there are some fish that may be dangerous to eat while pregnant because of their high content of mercury.

These fish may contain a high amount of mercury:

- Swordfish
- Shark
- King mackerel
- Tilefish

The FDA says it is safe to eat 12 ounces a week of the following:

- Shrimp
- Canned tuna
- Salmon
- Pollock
- Catfish

\* Albacore tuna and tuna steaks should be limited to 6 oz a week.

Avoid eating raw fish to avoid getting bacteria or viruses.

### Eating meat and poultry

Make sure all your meat and poultry is fully cooked in order to prevent ingesting bacteria like E coli. Cook the meat until the juices are clear, but also use a meat thermometer to make sure. Meat should be cooked to 160 degrees.



## Dairy Foods

Eating unpasteurized dairy products is definitely not on your pregnancy diet. Before eating, check the labels on the following list of soft cheeses to make sure they are not made with unpasteurized milk.

- Brie
- Feta
- Camembert
- Roquefort
- Mexican cheeses

## Avoid drinking lots of Caffeine

Drinking too much caffeine daily can affect your baby's heart rate and breathing, as well as the baby's weight at birth and the measurement of the head. Your doctor may want to put a limit on your daily caffeine intake.

It has also been suggested that drinking too much herbal tea while pregnant may cause contractions and therefore cause an increase in the risk of miscarriages or premature labor.

## Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

Because of the risk of fetal alcohol syndrome, miscarriage, and stillbirth, there is no tolerance for drinking alcohol while you are pregnant. And, of course, avoid illegal drugs. Even over-the-counter medications should be run by your doctor before you take them.

Remember, it is important to know what kinds of foods to avoid while being pregnant. It is just as important as knowing what kinds are good for you.



## Constipation and Hemorrhoids

Women suffer more frequently than men with constipation and hemorrhoids. And women who are pregnant will suffer even more so. To prevent constipation and hemorrhoids you should know what causes them to develop in pregnant women.

### Reasons for constipation

- The hormone called progesterone which increases during pregnancy may cause your stomach activity to slow down. This in turn will cause the stools to sit in your large intestine and become harder and drier.
- Taking prenatal vitamins that contain iron may increase constipation. Also there are certain antacids and calcium pills that may cause constipation, as well.
- When your uterus becomes larger, it may press on your stomach or bowel and therefore not allow the stool to pass through your system as easily.

### Try getting relief the natural way

Before you try any drugs or other medications, try the following:

- Do your exercises on a regular basis and drink plenty of water. You should drink at least 8-8oz glasses of water each day. Juices are also great to keep your stomach moving, but you still need to drink your 8 glasses of water.
- Eat foods that are rich in fiber -- fruits, vegetables and cereals that are high in fiber.
- Fiber supplements are safe to use everyday, even when you are pregnant.
- Prunes and prune juice are also very good in relieving constipation

### Other methods

Products that are considered to be stool softeners or mild laxatives are also safe to use every day. But do avoid taking products that have stimulants in them.



### Some don'ts

Don't use mineral oil to relieve your constipation. The mineral oil might prevent your body from being able to absorb all its nutrients. Castor oil is another item to avoid. It may cause early contractions in the uterus.

### Hemorrhoids

Avoiding constipation may be a start to avoiding hemorrhoids. After all, hemorrhoids are caused by straining to have a bowel movement. Besides the above listed suggestions for relieving constipation, here are a few more tips on preventing hemorrhoids from flaring up.

- Do not stand for any extended time
- Try putting your feet up throughout the day
- Take warm sitz baths
- Use ice to take any swelling down
- Try not to do any moderate or heavy lifting

If you are still having problems with either hemorrhoids or constipation tell your doctor. He or she will be your guide to help you overcoming this problem.