

Helping Women Exercise (Brisk Walking) During Pregnancy (4 pages)

Evaluate:

1. Obtain a history of the woman's experience with exercise.
 - a. Define exercise (walking to school/work, school PE, team sports, gym), including "just moving her body." Try to get a sense of how "active" she has been.
 - b. Start with childhood and review youth to present.
 - c. Discuss type, intensity, and consistency of exercise. What motivated her to start/stop?
 - d. What have been and are now her attitudes and feelings about 'exercise'?
2. Who has influenced her attitudes/feelings about exercise?
3. Help her become aware of self-defeating defenses and barriers, such as
 - "My mother sat on the couch and lived to be 90."
 - "I've been lazy as long as I can remember."
 - "Both of my parents overeat."
4. Review medical history for exercise risk – cardiac; orthopedic; pregnancy factors such as structural abnormalities of the uterus, vaginal bleeding, or rupture of the membranes; any illness or problem where activity should be restricted; history of three or more miscarriages or preterm births; multiple birth pregnancy.
5. Discuss motivation for starting a walking program NOW. Has she thought about it, tried it, is restarting, what are her concerns? Assess her readiness to change—
"Have you considered the idea of starting a regular exercise program like brisk walking while you are pregnant?" What stage is she in?

Pre-contemplation

"Why should I?"

Contemplation

"Not ready, but I have thought about it."

Preparation

"I'd like to try but don't know how."

Action

Trying and sometimes failing

Maintenance

Succeeding, failing and restarting

Inform – According to Stage:

1. Ideally, begin exercising before pregnancy!

2. Use prompts/information sheets on exercise to aid your discussion with client – Using graphics, make handouts or posters that would be visually appealing to her so that she can follow along as you review the benefits.

3. Pre-contemplation

- a. Focus on helping her connect with benefits that are most likely to have her CONSIDER exercising.
- b. This is where “*knowing the client*” can increase your effectiveness by understanding what kinds of things motivate her!
- c. It is not effective to teach her the “how to” when she has not yet decided it’s worth trying to exercise.
- d. Help patient identify her symptoms that could be relieved by exercise (i.e., increased energy, mood, general well being, decreased anxiety, stress, more regulated appetite).
 - a. Briefly explain ‘why’ it works (tailor to client), i.e., exercise changes brain chemistry .
- e. Explain both physical and mental benefits
“Women who exercise regularly during pregnancy maintain positive attitudes about themselves, their pregnancies and their upcoming labor and delivery.”
- f. Explain special benefits to her in regard to pregnancy (i.e., reduced maternal weight gain and fat accumulation and increased labor and delivery benefits, such as increased likelihood of uncomplicated spontaneous delivery, decreased need for pain meds, decreased need for episiotomy).
- g. Explain benefits to baby (i.e., regular exercise during pregnancy increases the blood volume which in turn increases the fetal oxygen delivery during both rest and exercise.)
- h. Help patient identify “The Big Enough Why” (What in all this information caught her attention? Is there anything that would motivate her to even consider walking?)
- i. Ask her if she would be interested in hearing what a program of brisk walking might involve. Only if she is somewhat interested, BRIEFLY summarize this for her. If she is not interested, time is better spent helping her find something that could become her “big enough why.”



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4. Contemplation

- a. She has been considering exercise or is open to ‘trying it,’ but is not ready to jump in and do it tomorrow.
- b. Review part or all of the above, plus focus on the “yes but.” Help her identify her concerns and problems (“feeling heard”).
- c. Explore and normalize ambivalence and fear of change
- d. Help her identify her “own wisdom,” ie, what she learned from previous attempts, successes, and failures?
- e. Provide motivational reading, videos, etc. Have her talk with another woman in your program who can give a “testimonial.”
- f. Encourage her to discuss exercise plans with her health care provider

5. Preparation

- a. She is now (finally) ready for the “HOW TO” that you have been wanting to discuss all along!
- b. Review all of the above that is pertinent to solidify her foundation for beginning.
- c. Help patient envision successfully engaging in regular walking program, rather than dwelling on symptoms or on the past.
- d. Help patient identify and request *specific* help from supporters.
- e. Help identify and make concrete plans to surmount specific barriers. What does she need to *DO* to pave the way? (i.e., get a stroller so can take along current child? Find walking partner who is energetic, positive and reliable?)
- f. Help patient set up an external reward system. Remind patient that program itself can give immediate rewards.
- g. Set a date to begin. Suggest patient make decision public. (More powerful than private commitment. Increases chances of success.)

Act:

1. Set up a walking schedule for at least three days a week, 30-60 minutes each day. (Five days would be better if she feels that is doable.)



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2. Determine what time of day would be most doable for her. Recommend exercising early in the day as this will improve mood and condition her metabolism for the whole day.
3. Do walking practice with client and show her how to take her heart rate at beginning of walk, at mid point and at end.
4. Evaluate the heart rate needed to maintain the appropriate exercise level. Suggest 60% of maximum heart rate for age. Age 18-25 is 120; age 26-33 is 114; age 34-41 is 110. See www.thebodyblues.com for more information.
5. Reinforce why it is critical to make her walking program a high priority.
6. Exercise that is most beneficial is sustained weight bearing exercise that utilizes a large portion of the body's muscle mass.
7. Recommend that it is helpful to stretch legs before and after walking or other weight bearing exercise.
8. Discuss benefits of walking outdoors in the light and problem solve for a safe and desirable place.
9. Help patient anticipate and accept uneven process of change. Plan what to do when (not if) she lapses.
10. Encourage client to keep an exercise walking record, recording time, heart rate and emotions.
11. Make an appointment for follow-up

Ongoing Follow-up (weekly intervals):

1. Evaluate days per week you completed at least 30 minutes of exercise.
 - a. How much was outside versus inside?
 - b. What was your beginning, mid and ending heart rate?
 - c. Who was your walking or exercise partner? Or, what rewards or motivations were most effective?
2. Record questions to discuss with your health provider.
 - a. Clarify what improvements are you aiming for. Select several things you would like to monitor each day, i.e., mood and energy. Each day rate how you are doing in that category (0-10 scale or whatever fits for you).



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