

Exercise and Pregnancy

People used to believe that exercising during pregnancy was dangerous. Today we know just the opposite is true. In fact, it will help you feel better.

Here are some important benefits of exercise:

- Stronger muscles prevent backaches and help you have an easier labor.
- Better blood flow helps your body digest food so you have fewer problems with constipation.
- Burning more calories will help you gain less weight.
- You feel less worried and anxious when you exercise.
- Regular exercise will help you sleep better.
- Exercise will give you more energy, not less.

If you want to begin exercising, you should first talk with your doctor or nurse. They will help you decide on the best kind of exercise to do. They will also help you change the way you exercise as your baby grows.

Here are some things to watch out for:

- Always stretch your muscles before you begin exercising.
- Take regular breaks.
- If you feel you are losing your breath, stop and rest.
- Drink plenty of water. A water bottle is your best friend.
- Wear comfortable shoes that support your ankles.
- Don't exercise in extremely hot weather.
- Don't walk or run where the ground is rocky or uneven.
- Never play sports where you could fall down or be hit.
- If you exercise with weights, don't lift them over your head.
- After the third month of pregnancy, do not lie flat on your back to exercise. This may reduce the amount of blood going to your baby.

Walking, jogging and swimming and are the best kinds of exercise. A stationary exercise bike is also recommended. It is not a good idea to ride bicycles or horseback ride, as you might fall. You should exercise for at least 20 minutes to see any difference. Exercising with a friend will help you stick with it. It also helps to exercise early in the day, before you get too busy. To read what other women have written about exercise during pregnancy, go to <http://lifematters.com/experience.html>.



Crib Sheets

Health information about pregnancy, parenting and infant care from the University of Washington School of Nursing.

For additional information, email stepup@u.washington.edu