

Pregnancy workouts: Safety

If you're feeling clueless about the rules of staying active when you're expecting, read on to have your questions answered.



How much exercise is the right amount in pregnancy?

- If you didn't exercise regularly before pregnancy, start with 15 minutes three times per week. You can increase it to 30 minutes four times per week, then daily .
- If you exercised regularly before pregnancy, you're fine to carry on with the same fitness routine that you did before. As pregnancy continues you should aim to gradually reduce it but get some advice from your midwife or doctor about how to do that

Can pregnancy exercise harm my baby?

- As long as you stick to the advice, exercising in pregnancy will not harm your baby. See our piece on which exercises are best to do to make sure you stay safe and you're good to go. In fact exercising in pregnancy can actually be good for your baby, and good for you.
- Are there any differences to exercising when I'm pregnant than normal?
- Apart from the obvious extra weight with the small human that's accompanying you on your run, there is another important difference. When you're pregnant your joints may become looser and you may be able to bend more than usual (Davies, 2003).
- Hormonal changes affect the ligaments that support the joints ready for when you give birth. This means you're at increased risk of injury and have a higher chance of spraining or straining your muscles. So be careful.

Is there anything else I need to know about exercise during pregnancy?

- Yes. Always listen to your own body and adapt any exercise as necessary to make it safe for pregnancy. Don't just assume

you can do the same as before. And if you're at a class, make sure the person leading is fully qualified and aware that you are pregnant. You might need some tweaks to the exercises to make them safe for your pregnancy.

Are there any red flags that should mean I stop exercising?

- Excessive shortness of breath before you've even exerted yourself
- Chest pains or palpitations
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Painful contractions, signs of labour or leaking amniotic fluid
- Vaginal bleeding
- Excessive tiredness
- Abdominal, pelvic or back pain
- Severe headache
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain or swelling
- Concerns that your baby is moving less
- Pain in the front or back of your pelvic girdle – pain anywhere from the lower spine or abdomen down to the thigh.

And then, tick off this checklist:

- Speak to your midwife or healthcare professional before starting any exercise during pregnancy.
- Eat before exercise and immediately afterwards too.
- Warm up before exercise and cool down afterwards.
- Keep well hydrated, drink approximately two and a half litres a day – particularly important for the first three months.
- Try to maintain a good posture.
- Don't exercise to exhaustion
- Don't exercise when it's hot or you're feeling unwell.
- Don't exercise on your back after 16 weeks as your bump could press on the main blood vessel bringing blood to your heart and can make you feel faint.
- Don't exercise if you have pelvic pain or blood spotting.
- Don't exercise if you're having a lot of Braxton Hicks contractions.
- Don't bump your bump – certain activities like contact and high-impact sport can pose potential dangers.
- Always check with your midwife or healthcare professional if you have any concerns.