



Pregnancy Exercise Guide

While mild to moderate stretching and conditioning during pregnancy can enhance the health of expectant mothers, some precautions should be taken. Follow these guidelines to stay fit and safe.

- Do not participate in strenuous exercise programs or aerobic workouts which cause your body temperature or heart rate to significantly exceed normal levels. *A high body temperature or fast heart rate can harm your unborn baby.*
- Avoid strenuous exercises which might strain the pelvic ligaments.
- Remember that because of your growing belly, your balance and coordination are compromised. Avoid activities which might cause you to suffer injury as a result of this.
- Some sports lower the levels of oxygen in the blood and, therefore, cause less oxygen to go to the baby. For this reason, avoid the following altogether:
 - Scuba diving
 - Marathon running
 - Climbing, hiking or skiing about 10,000 feet

Moderate exercise such as brisk walking and prenatal exercise classes are good for you and will help you feel better throughout pregnancy. Remember that the amount and type of exercise that feels comfortable will change as your pregnancy progresses. It is recommended that you exercise at least 3 times per week for 20 minutes each time. *At no time should you exercise to the point of exhaustion.*

The following guidelines may help you find activities you can continue during pregnancy:

- **Walking:** Brisk walking is always good exercise. If you were not active before you became pregnant, walking is a good way to begin an exercise program.
- **Swimming:** If you were used to swimming before pregnancy, you may continue. Swimming is a good choice in that it uses a variety of muscles, and the water supports your weight. However, you shouldn't dive in the later months of pregnancy.
- **Jogging:** Jogging can be done in moderation if you were jogging before you became pregnant. Avoid becoming overheated, and stop if you feel tired or uncomfortable. Drink ample water to replace fluids lost through sweating.
- **Tennis:** Moderate games of tennis are generally acceptable if you were used to playing tennis before pregnancy. Doubles matches are preferred. You may have problems with balance and sudden stops due to your growing abdomen.
- **Golf and Bowling:** These sports are fine for recreation, but don't really provide conditioning for the heart. You may have problems with balance.
- **Skiing:** Because of the risk of serious injury and hard falls while downhill

skiing, limit yourself to safe slopes. You may have problems with balance, although some pregnant skiers find the altered center of gravity more favorable. *Skiing at a very high altitude is not advised because of the decrease in oxygen.* Cross-country skiing is a safer choice, and also much better for building cardiovascular fitness.

- **Water skiing and surfing:** These sports should be avoided completely, as falls result in hitting the water with great force. Taking a fall at fast speeds could harm you or your baby.

If you have questions about the safety or effectiveness of activities not mentioned here, talk with your Women's Medical Center physician.