

Exercising While You Are Pregnant

While you are pregnant, being active is more important than ever. Move around as much as you can throughout the day. Also do structured exercise for at least 30 minutes on most if not all days of the week. These two kinds of physical activity can:

- Improve your baby's health
- Give you more energy
- Ease backache and swelling
- Help you stay "regular"
- Ease labor and childbirth
- Improve your sleep
- Lower your stress
- Lower your risk for diabetes
- Make it easier to get in shape after you have your baby

You should not exercise to lose weight during pregnancy. But regular exercise is a great way to help prevent too much weight gain.

Important: Talk with your doctor about exercise. Ask about the kinds and amount that are safe for you. This is especially important if you have any medical conditions or health risks.

See the ideas below. Check those you might like to try:

- Walking** is safe in general, even for women who did not exercise before pregnancy.
- Swimming** works many muscles in your body. It also helps you stay cool. It supports your extra body weight and helps prevent leg swelling.
- Biking** is fun to do with friends and family. Make sure your bike is stable and comfortable. Stay away from traffic. Be sure to wear a helmet. Your doctor may advise you not to bike at all or not to bike after a certain point in your pregnancy.
- Exercise classes for pregnant women** are offered at many gyms and community centers. The classes are designed with your safety in mind. They're also a way to make new friends!

Are you new to exercise? Start with as little as 5 minutes each day. Add 5 more minutes each day as tolerated. Did you exercise several times a week or more before pregnancy? Great, stay with it. You might want to consider adding a little more.



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CMN11-1118-2
UPMC_12_461

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C on C PA PREG C20111013-07 (MCG) 12/20/11 PDF

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Be safe

- Warm up for 5-10 minutes before you exercise. Also cool down for 5-10 minutes after you exercise. Simply walk or do whatever activity you plan to do, but do it more slowly.
- Do not exercise at a high intensity or until exhaustion. Use the “talk test” and slow down if you cannot talk to another person while you exercise.
- Avoid:
 - Fast changes in your direction (such as in soccer or racquet sports)
 - Jerking, bouncing, or twisting
 - Activities that might cause you to fall (such as horseback riding, rock climbing, or downhill or water skiing)
 - Contact sports (such as basketball or football)
 - Uneven surfaces
 - Hot environments, especially if humid
 - Lying flat on your back after the first three months
 - Exercise at high altitudes
 - Scuba diving
 - Stretching beyond a mild sensation
- Stop exercising and contact your doctor if you notice:
 - Dizziness, nausea, or weakness
 - Headache
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chest pain
 - Vaginal bleeding or discharge
 - Uterine contractions
 - Feeling cold or clammy
 - Joint pain
 - Calf pain or swelling

Some final tips

- Wear loose clothing, in layers. Be prepared for weather changes.
- Wear a supportive bra.
- Make sure your shoes are in good shape. They should fit you well. They should be suited to the kind of exercise you are doing.
- Finish meals at least one hour before you exercise.
- Carry healthy snacks. Examples are fruit or granola bars.
- Drink plenty of water during the day. Also drink water before, during, and after exercise. A good rule of thumb: Weigh yourself before and after exercise. Drink two cups of water for every pound you lose.

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Take Action

How will you be active in general and through exercise? In the chart below, make a plan for the coming week.

Day	Activity, Where, When	Minutes
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be active: Walk around the house while on the phone.</i> • <i>Exercise: Swim at the gym, 7 a.m.</i> 	60 20
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Total minutes		

Name three things you will do to be safe while you are active.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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