



The Wellness Family

Dr. Brayton Keeps You Informed

Exercising During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is one of the most important times of a woman's life and it's vital that the body is healthy and prepared to support the baby as it grows. Diet and exercise remain the two most essential factors in a healthy pregnancy.

Safe and Beneficial

"The most consistent benefit of exercise during pregnancy is psychological," states the Melpomene Institute of St. Paul, Minnesota, which does research on women's health issues. "Regular exercise during pregnancy allows women to have control over their bodies at a time of profound bodily changes. It gives them a chance to relax and helps them maintain a positive self-image."

It is generally accepted that most activities pursued prior to pregnancy can be continued, but as the pregnancy progresses it's wise to slow down and there are certain activities that should be avoided.

Some exercises have been extensively studied and found to be safe and beneficial during pregnancy, they include:

- Walking
- Stationary Cycling
- Aerobic exercises
- Dancing
- Resistance exercises
- Stretching exercises
- Hydrotherapy or water aerobics

Of course, it's wise to consider that pregnancy is not the time to make a major lifestyle change. Those living a more sedentary lifestyle prior to pregnancy should take things slow and consult with a healthcare professional or birthcare provider prior to implementing a rigorous exercise routine.

Benefits

There are several benefits related to exercising during pregnancy. The first would be the obvious control of gestational weight gain. All birth providers warn against gaining too much weight, and moderate exercise may help to avoid this issue.

What many don't typically know is that, beyond the obvious, prenatal exercise may result in higher incidence

of vaginal delivery (less need for medical intervention or c-section) and lower incidence of gestational diabetes. Additionally, exercising during pregnancy may reduce blood pressure, decrease other cardiovascular risks including clot formation and help to manage stable diabetes.

The most important benefit is helping to maintain an ideal prenatal body weight. Excessive weight gain during pregnancy has been shown to result in gestational diabetes, high blood pressure disorders such as preeclampsia or sleep apnea and may even result in the need for a c-section.



There are several benefits related to exercising during pregnancy.

Research has also shown that women that gain a lot of weight during pregnancy tend to have children who become overweight or obese.

Contraindications

While everyone agrees that exercise during pregnancy has its benefits, they also agree that there are reasons why it wouldn't be wise.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), there are a few reasons why exercise during pregnancy should be avoided, including those who suffer with the following:

- Restrictive lung disease
- Incompetent cervix
- Multiple pregnancies at risk for premature labor
- Severe anemia
- Unevaluated maternal cardiac arrhythmia
- Chronic bronchitis
- Poorly controlled type I diabetes or hypertension
- Extreme morbid obesity
- Extreme underweight (body mass index <12)
- History of extremely sedentary lifestyle

It's also important to consider which exercises should be avoided. For instance, walking and stationary cycling are

probably going to be safe for most women, but those with joint issues, excessive weight or other health concerns would typically be discouraged from aerobic exercises or dancing during pregnancy.

Guidelines

There are inherent benefits to exercising during pregnancy as well as precautions that should be taken to ensure the health of both the mother-to-be and the unborn baby.

The ACOG has set forth a few guidelines to take into account when deciding whether or not to make exercise a regular part of pregnancy.

Based on the unique physical and physiological conditions that exist during pregnancy, it's important to consider the following:

- Regular exercise at least 3 times a week is preferable to intermittent activity
- Vigorous exercise should not be performed in hot, humid weather or when fighting a fever
- Jerky, bouncy motions should be avoided as well as jumping, jarring motions or rapid changes in direction
- Vigorous exercise should be followed by a period of gradually declining activity that includes gentle stationary stretching
- Care should be taken to gradually rise from the floor to avoid a sudden drop in blood pressure (getting light-headed when standing too fast may result in a dangerous fall)
- Liquids should be taken liberally before, during and after exercise to prevent dehydration
- If any unusual symptoms appear, activity should be stopped and a healthcare provider consulted

These guidelines are primarily to avoid any risk of injury to the pregnant woman or fetus, but they may also help to prevent a dangerous fall.

Warning Signs

When exercising it's important to watch for any warning signs that the health of the baby could be being put at risk due to unusual physical activity.

The obvious signs that the pregnancy is in danger would include vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain or regular painful contractions. However, some unexpected but serious signs could also include amniotic fluid leaking or decreased fetal movement. Another serious warning sign is shortness of breath prior to even beginning exercising. These are all symptoms clearly related to the pregnancy and hazardous for the fetus.

Additional signs that may not be immediately recognized as concerning to the pregnancy, while definitely being a reason to discontinue exercising and seek the advice of a birth provider, include:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness that affects balance
- Calf pain or swelling of the calves

Each of these warning signs is a message from the body that something is amiss and should be discussed with a healthcare provider.

In Summary

Regular exercise during pregnancy clearly has its benefits and should be a part of every woman's prenatal period. Foremost, the overall health of both mother and child has to be considered first.

Walking, stationary cycling and healthy stretching are safe and beneficial. For further recommendations, take a moment to speak with your Family Wellness Chiropractor today.



Dear Patient,

Dr. Brayton is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

This newsletter is provided to you by:

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