

Should I exercise while I'm pregnant?

If you're an active person, you can be an active mother-to-be. Exercise is good for you, and, as studies have shown, it's also good for your baby — both while you're pregnant and after you've given birth. It stimulates healthy growth well into childhood and helps instill healthy habits in your child for their future.



What are the primary benefits to prenatal exercise?

For starters, exercise is good for your heart. Studies have shown good heart health early in pregnancy is associated with better postpartum health. It's also associated with less thickening of the inner layers of neck arteries (a sign of atherosclerosis) 10 years after pregnancy.

Exercise during pregnancy may also:

- Decrease your risk of preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and having a Cesarean section (C-section)
- Lessen back pain, ease constipation, help control ankle and leg swelling, and prepare your body for labor and delivery
- Promote healthy weight gain during pregnancy and healthy weight loss after your baby is born

How much exercise do I need when I'm pregnant?

Recommendations for pregnant women are the same as for most people:

- 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week

If you worked out more than that before you became pregnant, your obstetrician will likely give you the OK to continue your routine. If you begin to lose weight, be sure to eat more calories.

What's the best exercise for pregnant women?

- **Walking**—especially good if you're new to

exercise; bring your pet along or call a friend or family member along the walk

- **Swimming and water workouts**—these help you use different muscles without putting strain on your body
- **Stationary cycling**—this beats on-road cycling because you're less likely to fall; as your belly gets bigger, balancing can be a challenge
- **Yoga and pilates**—these classes can be helpful; for these and other low-impact aerobics classes, be sure to tell your instructor you're pregnant

What workouts should I avoid?

- **Contact sports**—to limit the chance of getting hit in the abdomen, steer clear of activities like martial arts, basketball, ice hockey, etc.
- **Hot yoga class**—you don't want to overheat
- **Activities with a high fall risk**—skiing, off-road cycling, horseback riding, etc.

Under what circumstances should I not exercise?

First, check with your health care provider before starting or continuing an exercise program. Most pregnant women are able to exercise, but certain conditions preclude others, including those with:

- Heart and lung issues
- Placenta previa after 26 weeks
- Preeclampsia or pregnancy-induced hypertension
- Severe anemia
- Risk factors for preterm labor or multiples

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What precautions should I take during my workouts?

- Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity
- Wear a supportive sports bra and loose-fitting clothes
- On hot, humid days, exercise in a temperature-controlled environment
- Avoid lying on your back or standing still for very long (which may cause a drop in blood pressure)

While exercising, what do I need to be aware of?

If you experience any of the following, stop immediately and call your OB-GYN:

- Bleeding, leaking fluid or gushing from the vagina
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Shortness of breath before you start your workout
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness (such as the calf) or swelling

- Headache
- Regular uterine contractions

After giving birth, how soon after can I start exercising?

Being active during pregnancy will make post-delivery exercise easier. Your timeline for exercise post-pregnancy will depend on your delivery:

- If you had a vaginal delivery, feel good and your OB-GYN gives the OK, you can start — slowly — within a few days of delivery
- If you had complications during delivery or had a C-section, you'll need to take it easy until you have your health care provider's approval

If you experience any issues while working out, stop and call your provider.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy) to learn more about the connection between pregnancy and cardiovascular risk.
- 2 Connect with other moms who've been where you are and get the support you need by joining our Maternal Health Forum on the Support Network at [goredforwomen.org/MaternalSupport](https://www.goredforwomen.org/MaternalSupport).

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Can I start exercising even if I wasn't very active pre-pregnancy?

Should I monitor my heart rate during exercise?

MY QUESTIONS:

A healthy pregnancy is best for both mom and baby. We have a library of resources to help you stay safe and healthy before, during and after pregnancy. Visit [goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy) to learn more.