

Exercise Guidelines During Pregnancy

Compiled with information from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology

- ❑ **In general, participation in a wide range of recreational activities appears to be safe.**

Those that probably should be avoided are: downhill skiing, high-altitude sports, hockey, gymnastics, horseback riding, scuba diving, and water-skiing.

Participation in recreational sports with a high potential for contact such as hockey, soccer and basketball could result in trauma to the woman and fetus.

Recreational sports with an increased risk of falling such as gymnastics, horseback riding, downhill skiing, or vigorous racquet sports have a high risk for trauma in pregnancy and non-pregnancy. Scuba diving poses an increased risk to the fetus for decompression sickness, and the fetus does not have the ability to filter bubble formation. Exertion at altitudes of 6,000 feet or less appears to be safe; however, engaging in physical activity at higher altitudes carries various risks.

- ❑ **In the absence of either medical or obstetric complications, pregnant women can adopt the current CDC and ACSM recommendations on exercise.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American College of Sports Medicine recommend 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise on most, if not all days of the week.

- ❑ **Previously active women and those with medical or obstetrical complications should be evaluated before recommendations for physical activity during pregnancy are made.**

Pregnant women, whether they have previously been exercising or not, should check with their doctor before starting an exercise routine.

- ❑ **A physically active woman with a history of or risk for preterm labor or fetal growth restriction should be advised to reduce her activity in the second and third trimesters.**

- ❑ **Pregnant women should avoid or minimize certain positions during exercise.**

The supine position (flat on back) should be avoided during exercise as much as possible after the first trimester due to the possible effect it could have on the fetal blood flow. Motionless standing is also associated with a significant decrease in cardiac output and should be avoided as much as possible.

- ❑ **Absolute contraindications to Aerobic Exercise during Pregnancy (Women with one or more of the following conditions should not participate in an exercise program during pregnancy)**

1. Hemodynamically significant heart disease
2. Restrictive lung disease
3. Incompetent cervix/cerclage

4. Multiple gestation at risk for premature labor
 5. Persistent second- or third-trimester bleeding
 6. Placenta previa after 28 weeks gestation
 7. Premature labor during the current pregnancy
 8. Ruptured membranes
 9. Preeclampsia/pregnancy-induced hypertension
- **Relative Contraindications (Women with one or more of the following conditions should participate in an exercise program during pregnancy only with the approval and supervision of a physician or healthcare provider)**
1. Severe anemia
 2. Unevaluated maternal cardiac arrhythmia
 3. Chronic bronchitis
 4. Poorly controlled type 1 diabetes
 5. Extreme morbid obesity
 6. Extreme underweight (BMI <12)
 7. History of extremely sedentary lifestyle
 8. Intrauterine growth restriction in current pregnancy
 9. Poorly controlled hypertension
 10. Orthopedic limitations
 11. Poorly controlled seizure disorder
 12. Poorly controlled hyperthyroidism
 13. Heavy smoker
- **Warning Signs to Terminate Exercise while Pregnant**
1. Vaginal bleeding
 2. Labored breathing prior to exertion
 3. Dizziness
 4. Headache
 5. Chest Pain
 6. Muscle weakness
 7. Calf pain or swelling (need to rule out vein inflammation due to a blood clot)
 8. Preterm labor
 9. Decreased fetal movement
 10. Amniotic fluid leakage