



Exercising while pregnant:

Exercise and healthy eating is extremely beneficial for women but it is also beneficial for setting up a child's immune response from an early stage.

- Women who did moderate exercise throughout pregnancy had an increased fetoplacental growth rate as early as 20 weeks
 - Fetoplacental growth rate means that the placenta had significantly more volume → these women had larger newborns with less body fat (healthy babies!)
- Women who did moderate exercise throughout pregnancy also had a 31% reduction in Gestational Diabetes (GD)
 - GD: a condition in which a woman without diabetes develops high blood sugar levels during pregnancy
 - Developing GD increases the risk of pre-eclampsia, depression and requiring a c-section

The literature shows that a combination of strength training and cardio has the most health benefits for mom and baby

- As opposed to strength training OR cardio alone

Exercise Recommendations:

- For Healthy-weight pregnant women:
 - 30-45 minutes
 - 50-75% of VO₂ max (this can be compared to a 5-7/10 of your max exertion)
 - 15 minute cool down/recovery (gentle walking or cycling) to help your heart rate come down gradually
 - Most or all days of the week
- For women who were sedentary prior to pregnancy:
 - Start at a low intensity (50% of max effort)
 - Start by exercising in 10 minute stretches with 10 minutes of break in between
 - Build up over the next 2-4 weeks to 30-45 minute sessions and high max effort of 75%
 - It is safe and recommended that sedentary women start or increase their exercising while pregnant as able

Medical or Obstetric complications which may require a pregnant person from participating in exercise and should be discussed with your doctor:

*** If you have any of the below conditions, discuss exercise guidelines with your midwife or obstetrician

- Obesity (BMI >30kg/m) → BMI chart included at the bottom of this handout
- Chronic hypertension
- Diabetes
- Smoker
- Anemia
- Cardiovascular disease

Absolute contraindications to exercise:

*** List

- Contact sports
- Activities with risk of impact
 - Non-stationary cycling
 - Skiing (downhill)
 - Racket sports (

Pre-eclampsia:

- High blood pressure (can develop even if women have no history of blood pressure issues)
- Usually begins after 20 weeks
- Symptoms:
 - Weight gain
 - Edema (swelling) of hands and feet
 - Hypertension
 - Severe headaches
 - Vision changes
 - Upper abdominal pain (sometimes mistaken for heartburn)
 - Difficulty breathing
- Check in with your doctor if you are worried about any of the above symptoms

When to terminate exercise immediately:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Amniotic fluid leakage – clear fluid
- Contractions more frequent than every 6 minutes
- Chest pain
- Irregular heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Syncope/feeling faint

- Calf pain and swelling

Things to be mindful of when exercising:

- Reaching your VO2 max/point of exhaustion
 - Most pregnant women should stay between 70-75% of their max effort
 - Women who are used to exercising at a really high intensity can continue to exercise closer to 80-90% of their max
- Exercising in the heat:
 - Take more breaks than normal, drink more water and DON'T skip the cool down (15 full minutes)
- Contractions while exercising:
 - Check in with your doctor just in case
 - Other causes: inducible cervix, dehydration, Braxton-hix
- **All exercising should be performed well and hydrated!!!**

BMI index below:

