



Pre and Postnatal Exercise 10 Tips.

It's a fact, exercise during and after pregnancy is important for your health and the health of your baby. As excited as new moms are about the birth of their baby, they also can't believe the body that's been left behind. It is amazing the transformation our bodies make! Our round, voluptuous body seemed beautiful while pregnant and then a few weeks after birth seems like bread dough. What makes matters challenging is that new moms 1) don't have time to do traditional exercise and 2) shouldn't be dieting. Your body has undergone a tremendous amount during pregnancy, so the last thing you should do is deprive it of precious nutrients.

During your pregnancy exercise can help decrease or prevent excessive weight gain & postpartum weight retention, gestational diabetes, blood pressure, deep venous thrombosis, maternal discomforts like nausea, leg cramps, varicose veins, swelling, back pain, anxiety and depression. Women who exercise during their pregnancy can experience a reduced weight (7 lbs), reduced fat gain (3% less) and retain less fat after pregnancy (Clapp & Little 1995).

After your pregnancy, the postnatal period, regular and proper exercise can have some great benefits. Quicker return to normal activities of daily life, return to pre-pregnancy body composition, improved self-esteem, and less post-partum depression. Recent research by the International Journal of Nursing Practice, 2005, "Concludes that gaining fitness through the sociability of stroller walking may be a more effective treatment for depression....."

Here are some general recommendations for postnatal exercise. Most important of all please consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.

10 great tips for exercise during and after pregnancy

1. Regular exercise (at least 3 times per week) is preferable to intermittent activity. Competitive activities should be discouraged.
2. Breastfeeding while exercising is fine. With Moderate exercise there is no adverse affect on quantity or quality of breast milk nor is there significant increase in lactic acid in breast milk. After exercising, wipe off with a towel prior to latching on.

3. Ballistic movements (jerky, bouncy motions) should be avoided. Exercise should be done on a wooden floor or a tightly carpeted surface to reduce shock and provide a sure footing.

4. Deep flexion or extension of joints should be avoided because of connective tissue laxity. Activities that require jumping, jarring motions or rapid changes in direction should be avoided because of joint instability.

5. Vigorous exercise should be preceded by a 5-minute period of muscle warm-up. This can be accomplished by slow walking or stationary cycling with low resistance.

6. Vigorous exercise should be followed by a period of gradually declining activity that includes gentle stationary stretching. Because connective tissue laxity increases the risk of joint injury, stretches should not be taken to the point of maximum resistance.

7. Stress management: exercise should be stress relieving vs. stress producing. You and your baby should feel great after a workout.

8. It doesn't need to hurt. In fact, it shouldn't. Your body needs lots of energy to recover from pregnancy and childbirth and to take care of your baby (especially if you're nursing). Exercising at the right intensity will give you more energy, not take it away. How do you know if you're working at the right level? Try the talk test. If you're working so hard that you can't sing the ABC's to her, then you are working too hard. Find a good balance of being just a little bit out of breath.

9. Women who have led sedentary lifestyles should begin with physical activity of very low intensity and advance activity levels very gradually.

10. Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate. Everyone is supposed to drink 8, 8-oz glasses of water a day. If you are nursing, you'll need even more. Make sure that you are drinking water throughout your workout.

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