

Exercise Dos and Don'ts for Prenatal Women

Do

- **Check with your physician before beginning any prenatal exercise program.** ACOG provides a list of conditions that require physician approval or contraindicates any exercise during pregnancy.
- **Think safety.** Remember that with exercise, the health of the baby and the mother are top priority.
- **Listen to your body.** If it doesn't feel right, modify the movement or eliminate it. Modify or stop exercise if you experience extreme fatigue or discomfort.
- **Include muscular endurance exercises.** Specifically, strengthen the thighs, chest, shoulders, upper and lower back, buttocks, abdominals and pelvic floor muscles.
- **Include stretching.** Specifically stretch the inner thighs, lowerback, hamstrings, chest and calves.
- **Modify the intensity of the activity.** Women who have exercised vigorously before becoming pregnant should be willing to modify their activities, particularly during the third trimester of pregnancy.
- **Modify the exercises if shortness of breath occurs.**
- **Intake adequate calories.** The demands of pregnancy require 300 extra calories per day plus the calorie requirement of activity.
- **Eat a high carbohydrate snack prior to exercise.** Graham crackers, bagels, juice, nuts or fruit are good examples.
- **Stay well hydrated.** Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise to help prevent dehydration.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear light, cotton clothing that breathes. Overdressing contributes to overheating during exercise.
- **Use relaxation exercises.**
- **Exercise daily.**

Exercise Dos and Don'ts for Prenatal Women

Don't

- **Use jerky, jarring and twisting movements.** This type of activity puts additional stress on joints and body areas already overloaded by the increased weight of the pregnancy and affected by hormonal changes.
- **Make quick directional changes.** Your body shape and center of gravity changes continually as the pregnancy progresses, resulting in reduced balance.
- **Lie on the back after the first trimester of pregnancy.** The supine position may restrict blood flow by the enlarging uterus. If you are lying on your back and symptoms occur such as dizziness, nausea or shortness of breath, roll to your left side.
- **Do exercises that decrease the pulmonary space.** This includes curl-ups or bending forward with the head down.
- **Do exercises or activities that compromise hip/pelvis joint structure.** This includes extreme or rapid leg lifts.
- **Do activities that could cause trauma to the abdominal area.**
- **Engage in competitive, unfamiliar activities.**
- **Hold your breath during exercise.**
- **Exercise for weight loss during pregnancy.**

Fitness before, during and after pregnancy can be an important part of motherhood. By following these guidelines and doing what feels good, your exercise efforts are sure to contribute to the health and well-being of yourself and your baby. GET FIT! BE FIT! STAY FIT!