

Physical Activity Guidelines

Pregnancy and Post-Partum

Physical activity is recommended for Healthy Pregnant or Postpartum individuals to benefit overall health. Below, find some recommendations for incorporating physical activity into your routine:

How should I start?

Talk to Your Doctor: If you are pregnant, you should be under the care of a doctor who can monitor the progress of the pregnancy. Consult your doctor about whether or how to adjust your physical activity during and after your pregnancy.

Moderate-Intensity: Moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, keeps your heart and lungs healthy during and after pregnancy

Pregnant or postpartum individuals should do at least 150 minutes (for example, 30 minutes a day, five days a week) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, such as brisk walking, during and after their pregnancy. It is best to spread this activity throughout the week.

Those who already habitually engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, such as running, can continue doing so during and after their pregnancy, so long as this is approved by their doctor.



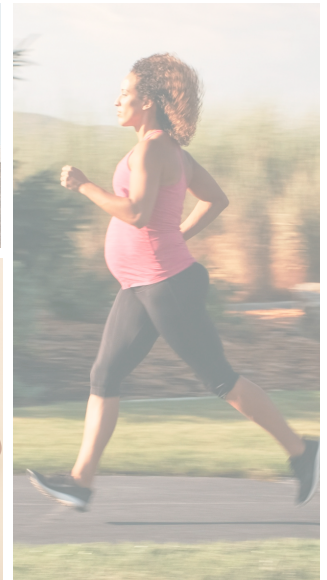
Moderate Intensity	Vigorous Intensity
<p>The talk test is a simple way to measure relative intensity. In general, if you're doing moderate-intensity activity, you can talk but not sing during the activity.</p>	<p>In general, if you're doing vigorous-intensity activity, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisk walking (3 mph or faster, but not race-walking) • Water aerobics • Bicycling slower than 10 mph on primarily flat terrain without hills • Tennis • Low-impact yoga • Gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race walking, jogging, or running • Swimming laps • Aerobic dancing • Bicycling 10 mph or faster that may include hills • Jumping rope • Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack

Safety Tips

- When you exercise, start slowly, progress gradually, and cool down slowly.
- You should be able to talk while exercising at a moderate intensity.
- Take frequent breaks. If you feel uncomfortable, short of breath, or tired, take a break and take it easier when you exercise again.
- Avoid jerky, bouncing, and high-impact movements. Connective tissues stretch much more easily during pregnancy. So these types of movements put you at risk of joint injury.
- Be careful not to lose your balance. As your baby grows, your center of gravity shifts making you more prone to falls. For this reason, activities like jogging, using a bicycle, or playing racquet sports might be riskier as you near the third trimester.
- Don't exercise at high altitudes (more than 6,000 feet). It can prevent your baby from getting enough oxygen.
- Make sure you drink lots of fluids before, during, and after exercising.
- Do not workout in extreme heat or humidity.

Stop exercising and call your doctor as soon as possible if you have any of the following:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Chest pain
- Calf pain or swelling
- Abdominal pain
- Blurred vision
- Fluid leaking from the vagina
- Vaginal bleeding
- Less fetal movement
- Contractions



Frequently Asked Questions

What if I can't do 150 minutes every week or 30 minutes 5 days/week?

Any amount of time is acceptable and even beneficial. We know 150 minutes each week sounds like a lot of time, but you don't have to do it all at once. It best to spread your physical activity out during the week, but you can break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day, such as two 15-minute walks instead of one 30-minute walk. As long as your aerobic physical activity is a moderate or vigorous effort, any amount of time counts toward meeting the guideline.



What are some of the benefits of physical activity during and after my pregnancy?

Being physically active during and after pregnancy can help reduce your risk of preeclampsia, excessive weight gain, gestational diabetes, and keep your heart and lungs healthy. Regular exercise may improve sleep during pregnancy. Exercise can also ease and prevent aches and pains of pregnancy including constipation, varicose veins, backaches, and exhaustion. Staying active can protect your emotional health; pregnant women who exercise seem to have better self-esteem and a lower risk of depression and anxiety. Results from a recent, large study suggest that women who are physically active during pregnancy may lower their chances of preterm delivery. During the postpartum period (first year after delivery), physical activity can decrease symptoms of postpartum depression. When combined with proper diet, it can also help you with weight loss after delivery.

When should I begin incorporating physical activity?

Unless you have a medical reason to avoid physical activity during or after your pregnancy, you can begin or continue moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity. Moderate-intensity physical activity is safe for you during pregnancy if you are generally healthy.

Are there risks involved with physical activity and pregnancy?

According to scientific evidence, the risks of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, are very low for healthy pregnant women. Physical activity does not increase your chances of low-birth weight, early delivery, or early pregnancy loss. Physical activity does not appear to have adverse effects on breast milk volume, breast milk composition, or infant growth.

Are there any movements or exercises that I should avoid?

After the first trimester, try to avoid activities that require lying flat on your back lying because this position can restrict blood flow to the uterus and fetus. You should avoid participating in contact or collision sports and activities with high risk of falling or abdominal trauma, such as soccer, basketball, horseback riding, or downhill skiing.

Why may I be advised not to exercise during pregnancy?

If you have one of these conditions, your doctor will likely advise you not to exercise:

- Risk factors for preterm labor
- Vaginal bleeding
- Preeclampsia
- Premature rupture of membranes (when your water breaks early, before labor)

References

Staying healthy and safe | Office on Women's Health. (February 2021). Retrieved May 10, 2022, from <https://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/youre-pregnant-now-what/staying-healthy-and-safe>

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