



infosheet

Pregnancy and post-partum care

Pregnancy brings extraordinary changes to the woman's body and the extra responsibility of caring for your child as well as yourself. Most women will experience some pain and fatigue during their pregnancy, but with the right care and a sensible lifestyle you should continue to enjoy a healthy, comfortable and active body.

Is there relief for back pain during pregnancy?

Back pain during pregnancy is often felt over the pubic symphysis, pelvic floor and sacroiliac joints. There is evidence that targeted manual therapy along with appropriate exercise (mild to moderate intensity floor or water exercise) can help.

How much activity is safe during pregnancy?

Advice about the level of safe activity while you are pregnant can be confusing. Concerns have been raised that strenuous activity could cause overheating and harm baby or mother.

In testing these theories, researchers found that more vigorous exercise was safe if the woman had been accustomed to this level of exercise prior to her pregnancy (Penttinen & Erkkola 1997; Kardel & Kase 1998). However, others found that women who exercised strenuously 5 times per week had lower weight babies than those exercising 3 times per week (Campbell and Mottala 2001).

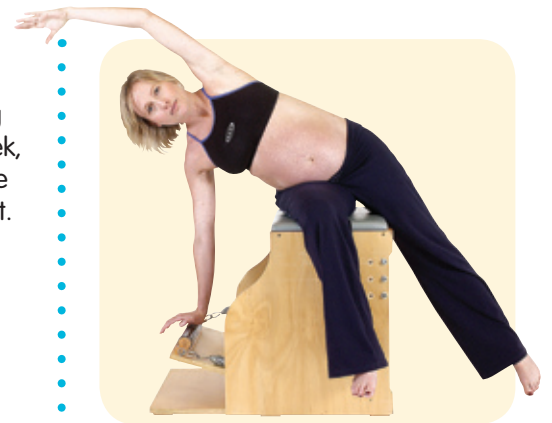
As a result it is recommended that pregnant women may continue to exercise at their usual intensity, limiting strenuous exercise to three times a week, but that they should seek advice before increasing the intensity of their workout. Certain exercises, such as stomach crunches should be replaced with alternative exercises on the hands and knees and side-lying. See your doctor if you feel unwell or if spotting occurs.

Exercise guidelines for new mothers

Approximately one in three women experience pain persisting after the birth. Thankfully, some evidence suggests exercise during and after pregnancy may reduce this risk. The following are some evidence based guidelines for exercise after birth:

- Commencing pelvic floor exercises soon after birth may reduce future urinary incontinence
- Women should discuss their exercise plans during the 6 week review
- Most exercise can be resumed by the sixth week
- Given the added fatigue of caring for a new born, consider reducing the intensity of your exercise, and building up gradually
- Women who have had caesarean or complicated delivery should monitor the level of discomfort and healing
- Moderate exercise does not affect breast milk or baby's growth.

References: Davies, G. A. L., et al (2003). Joint SOGC/ CSEP Clinical Practice Guideline: Exercise in Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period. *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*, 28(3), 329-341.
 Stuge, B., et al (2004). The Efficacy of a Treatment Program Focusing on Specific Stabilizing Exercises for Pelvic Girdle Pain After Pregnancy. *Spine*, 29(10), E197-E203.
 Stuge, B., et al (2003) Physical therapy for pregnancy-related low back and pelvic pain: a systematic review. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*. 82(11):983-990.



Services provided by the Solutions team:

- Solutions Osteopaths and Physiotherapists can assess you to determine which structures are pain producing and determine how well your muscles are working to support you. They can then design a therapy plan using hands on therapy and exercise. We can advise on appropriate exercise to maintain fitness or get your body back in shape after the birth.
- Sonia Henry has a particular interest in treating pelvic floor insufficiency.
- Solutions exercise therapists can design an individual program that provides just the right amount of support or challenge during your pregnancy and in the post partum period.
- Solutions pre and post natal exercise classes using the Pilates Method are a great way to stay comfortable and retain fitness safely.

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