

Most women don't really enjoy working out, but it is more important than ever when you are expecting. It has been proven that physically fit women recover much more quickly after giving birth than women who aren't as fit. We've put together some great suggestions for exercises that you can do throughout pregnancy to keep you fit and healthy.

Aerobic Exercises for Pregnant Women



What is an aerobic exercise? Is it calisthenics? Isometrics? Slimnastics? Working with weights/ Sports like racquetball, golfing, softball, tennis? No! It is lap swimming, jogging, walking, biking, rowing, dancing, cross country skiing, and so on. Aerobic exercise differs from other exercises, in that they center upon your heart, lungs and circulatory system [collectively called your cardiopulmonary system], while other forms of exercise concentrate on your muscular system. An activity or exercise is aerobic if it is [1] makes your heart work harder than usual over an extended period of time and [2] creates an increased demand for oxygen, [3] making you breath more deeply and rapidly to meet your body's increased metabolic demand.

What can aerobic exercise do for you? Everyone benefits from such exercise because it is individualized to each person, whatever the level of fitness, whether pregnant or not. Aerobic exercise during pregnancy has been widely studied, but knowledge of maternal and fetal physiology, as well as the few studies that have been done, indicates that aerobic exercise during pregnancy is safe and effective in improving maternal fitness, among the benefits reported are the following:

You have more energy, you feel less tired and fatigued.

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BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

After having the baby, it is important to continue working out as well. It can be difficult to juggle the new baby with working out so consider buying a jogging stroller. That way you can go for a run or brisk walk with baby in tow. They'll love getting out of the house too.

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1. Your heart muscle becomes stronger, meaning that it beats fewer times each minute and rests longer between beats.
2. The walls of your blood vessels are toned and strengthened, becoming more flexible. This enhances circulation throughout your entire body.
3. Your lung capacity increases, opening up unused air sacs. This brings more oxygen for your blood to distribute to all parts of your body, including the uterus, the placenta and your baby.
4. Your stamina and endurance increases, enabling you to do more without tiring as quickly. Stamina and endurance are extremely important during labor and birth. Although fitness does not guarantee a quick, easy, or painless labor, aerobically fit women seem to experience less fatigue during and after labor.
5. Recovery after birth is generally quicker to physically fit women than to physically unfit women.

If you are building your fitness level, you must exercise a minimum of three times a week. Four to six times is even better.

The Aerobic Exercise Session

Each workout or exercise session should consist of three parts: a warm up period, the aerobic workout, and a cool down period.

The Warm Up

Don't neglect this. No aerobic workout should be started on a "cold" body. Warm up moves:

1. Signal your body that more vigorous activity is coming and
2. Prevent injury by releasing muscle tension and making the body more flexible.

Spend a minimum of five minutes, [ten is better] stretching and limbering up. Stretch just to the point of mild tension [not pain], and then hold the stretch for a slow count of ten. Release and repeat three times in all. No bouncing! It will only make your muscles tighter. Concentrate stretches on the lower body [legs, ankles, hips, knees], but don't completely neglect the upper body [arms, shoulders, neck]. If you are walking, lap swimming, biking, or engaging in some other independent activity, spend another five minutes moving slowly, and gradually move faster and faster toward your target zone. In other words, don't stretch and then "burst" into your pulse range.

The Stretches

Hold each stretch for ten seconds.

Calf Stretch

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1. Face a wall for support. Stand a little distance from the wall and rest your forearms on the wall. Place your forehead on the back of your hands, and keep your back flat.
2. Bend one knee and bring it toward the wall. The back leg should be straight and your foot flat, heel pressed into the floor. Create an easy feeling of stretch in your calf muscle.
3. Hold an easy stretch for ten seconds, and then increase the stretch feeling for another ten seconds.

Soleus [deep Calf] and Achilles Tendon Stretch

1. Start in the same position as for the calf stretch.
2. Lower hips downward as you slightly bend your knees. Be sure to keep your back flat. Your back foot should be slightly toed- in or pointing straight ahead during the stretch. Keep heel pressed down.

Back, Calf and Hamstring Stretch

1. Sit with one leg bent and the other leg stretched forward. Straight leg should have back of knee flay on floor.
2. Find an easy stretch. Lean forward from the hips to increase the stretch.

The Aerobic Workout

Spend a minimum of twelve minutes with your pulse in your target zone, be aware that you may need to spend longer than twelve minutes in your activity to meet the twelve minute requirement. For instance, you may have to bike for twenty minutes to actually keep your pulse within your target zone for twelve continuous minutes, or walk briskly for fifteen or twenty minutes to satisfy the twelve minute minimum.[the accompanying chart shows a recommended walking program]. Recently, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommended no more than fifteen or twenty minutes of aerobics in your target zone during pregnancy. This amount is sufficient, when repeated three times a week, to develop or maintain aerobic fitness. Until you increase your body awareness and know the internal feelings that mean you are in the correct pulse zone, depend on your watch, frequent pulse checks, and the talk test.