

Working out during pregnancy is not only a great way to stay physically fit, but emotionally fit as well. Getting out of the house to get some fresh air can do a lot of good for mind, body and spirit. When a woman is expecting, her body goes through many changes that may preclude her from walking the way that she has in the past. However, this article outlines some suggestions for a suitable pregnancy walking program.

## Walking Exercise During Pregnancy



A good activity to begin during pregnancy is a walking program, three to five days/week. Walking is an inexpensive form of exercise, as the only requirements are a suitable pair of shoes and comfortable clothing. Also, it is an activity that can be readily integrated into daily schedules. During pregnancy, you can improve your aerobic fitness by walking on level ground at a comfortable pace. However, it may be necessary to use modified forms of walking to gain significant benefits. Walking at increased speeds, up

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and down hills, and while carrying weights can raise the heart rate to levels that will improve aerobic fitness.

Warm Up	Walk	Cool Down
5-10 minutes	5 minutes, slowly	5-10 minutes
	15 minutes, briskly *	
	5 minutes slowly	

\*Remember. Walk with your pulse in your target heart rate zone. Never exercise to exhaustion. End your workout at the point of which you feel you could go on

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

If you don't want to feel run down during and after pregnancy, a walking or exercise program is critical. Just be sure to consult with your physician regarding length and intensity limitations that your pregnancy might impose.

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for another ten minutes.


## The Cool Down

Once you stimulate your circulation and complete your twelve minute workout, slow down your activity gradually, over a five minute period. Before you actually sit down [or begin strengthening exercises] your pulse should be below your target zone of 110 bpm or lower. Then stretch again for five minutes [ten minutes is even better], and you're done! You will feel warm, full of energy, and virtuous

## Strengthening Exercises

Strengthening exercises, or calisthenics, can be fun as well as beneficial when done to music. They tone, strengthen, and increase your muscle mass to help you perform better in physical activity and look glowing in pregnancy and sleek after delivery. The exercises that follow will strengthen all muscle groups.

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## Cautions

During pregnancy, do not perform an exercise that calls for you to lie on your back for more than one minute. If repetitions are not complete in one minute by the clock, go to the next exercise and then come back to the previous exercise to complete repetitions.

When a pregnant woman is lying on her back, the uterus [with the weight of the baby] presses on the vena cava, a large blood vessel directly behind the uterus. This pressure decreases blood flow to the lower part of the body and inhibits returning blood flow to the upper body and heart blood flow [and therefore oxygen supply] to the pelvic region, where baby growth is in progress, is decreased. Blood pressure drops, while the pulse increases. In early pregnancy, these changes may be slight and barely noticed by the mother. After the fourth month, however, these changes are more pronounced. Even if the mother does not experience symptoms or if the symptoms are not strongly felt, the physical changes still occur, compromising the well-being and physical and mental health of the growing baby.

Symptoms range from a feeling of vague discomfort to shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety and even fainting. All symptoms can be relieved [and avoided]

by turning on the side, especially the left side, which allows the uterus to roll completely off the vena cava.

Lying on your back should be avoided except for one minute by the clock, to perform abdominal exercises. If you choose not to lie on your back at all, exercise the abdominal muscles by using the Pelvic Rock on All Fours and Sit-Backs exercises. These are not as efficient for strengthening the abdominal muscles, but will still allow you to exercise them while avoiding the supine position.

Situations other than exercise may also cause the vena cava to be compressed. Try to sleep on your side at night, and avoid flopping back in chairs and propping yourself up on an angle when sitting on the floor.

Remember, before beginning any exercise program, it is important to check with your doctor.