

When starting out, you should plan a routine that is easy to follow and stay with. As the program becomes more routine, you can vary your exercise times and activities.

Strengthening Exercises for Pregnancy and After Delivery



All exercises should be performed at least three times a week, on alternate days, on a firm surface. Perform in order. Be sure to breath normally during all exercises, don't hold your breath. During abdominal exercises, it may be easier to exhale on exertion, that is, inhale when you are down and exhale briskly as you perform the lift. Remember don't lie on your back for longer than one minute by the clock. The following exercises work all muscle groups. Don't skip any!

Hamstring Lift

Start with five, increase to twenty.

1. Rest on hands and knees, with back flat and abdominal muscles squeezed tightly [do not let abdominal muscles "hang loose"].
2. Extend left leg straight behind the foot flexed [do not point].
3. Keeping back flat, lift leg up until it is level with back. Weight should be shifted to left arm.
4. Lower leg. Repeat several times.
5. Change sides and repeat, shifting weight to right arm.

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BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Choose an activity you enjoy. Exercising should be fun and not a chore. You may even be able to include your baby, try jogging or walking with the stroller & think little bundle of joy as a 12+ pound weight. Exercise can double as playtime

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

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Inner Thigh Lift

Start with five and increasing to twenty repetitions.

1. Lie on side with bottom leg straight, inside of leg toward ceiling. Bend top leg with foot resting, flat, in front of bottom leg at the thigh. [Alternatively, top leg may be bent with foot resting behind bottom leg].
2. With foot flexed, lift bottom leg slowly two to three inches. [As far as it is comfortable].
3. Lower bottom leg slowly to the floor-do not drop it!
4. Repeat several lifts. Be sure to stay on your side, not rolling back on your buttocks.
5. Change sides and repeat.

Outer Thigh Lift

Start with five and increasing to twenty repetitions.

1. Lie on side, head resting on hand, and body straight [no flexion of hips]. Bottom leg may be bent at a forty-five degree angle for balance.
2. Slowly lift top leg straight up and slightly back. Hold for a slow count of five, and then lower slowly.
3. Repeat several times, change sides.

Chest Muscle Exercise

Start with five and increasing to twenty repetitions.

1. Raise elbows to shoulder height, place palms together.
2. Press palms together for a slow count of five.
3. Locking fingers pull against fingers for a slow count of five. Do not hold your breath. [This stage of the exercise actually strengthens muscle in the upper back.]

Pelvic Rock on All Fours

Start with five and increasing to twenty repetitions.

1. Rest on hands and knees, with back straight and knees comfortably apart.
2. Picture yourself as having a tail. Tuck your" tail" between your legs, rocking your pelvis under and arching your lower back. Hold for a slow count of four.

- Return to starting position, without allowing your back to sag, tuck and release slowly, do not jerk. Hold the tucked position for a full count of ten. Squeeze your pelvic floor at the same time for an added benefit.

Note: Do not allow the lower back to cave in.

Diagonal Knee and Arm Reach

Five to ten times.

- Lie flat on back with knees bent and feet flat.
- Flatten lower back to floor, raise head [straight up towards ceiling, not with chin down on chest.], shoulders, right arm and left knee all together slowly.

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- Lie back slowly. Arms may reach and crossed on chest or behind head [do not pull on neck].
- Repeat raising left arm and right knee.

Pile

Start with five, gradually increasing to twenty repetitions.

- Stand with feet about two feet apart and toes turned comfortably out.
- Slowly bend the knees, keeping back flat. Buttocks should never lower past the knees. Knees should be over toes-don't let them fall in.
- Rise slowly, concentrating on the leg muscles as you push upward. Heels should remain flat during the entire movement.

Not: To advance the exercise, stay down for fifteen to thirty seconds, and then rise slowly.

Sit Back

Start with ten, increasing to twenty

repetitions.

Sit with soles together and comfortably away from body, arms held parallel to the floor in front of you.

1. Tuck chin to chest and curl back slowly until you are half to three quarters of the way down, keeping edges of feet on the floor and back rounded. [do not attempt this with a straight back]
2. Return to sitting position. Exhale as you curl back [if this is easy to perform, do the exercise with arms crossed over chest] does not try to curl back to the floor and up again.

Curl up

Five to twenty times.

1. Lie on back, with knees bent and feet close to buttocks. Press back down, inhale slowly and deeply.
2. Exhale slowly; at the same time, lift head and shoulders. Perform slowly and with control [no jerky movements]. Head stays in line with spine, do not throw head forward. Relax jaw and neck muscles. The "lift" comes from the shoulders and should be straight up with face toward the ceiling
3. Slowly return to starting position, inhale as you do so.

Pelvic Floor Squeeze [Kegel Exercise]

Twenty sets per day

1. Sit or stand comfortably [you can do this exercise in most positions]. The farther the legs are apart the more challenging.
2. Thinking about the vagina and perineum, tighten the pelvic floor as if to lift the internal organs or to stop urination in midstream. Hold as tightly as possible for a slow count of five [be sure to breath]
3. Relax completely.

Note: Because these muscles fatigue easily, repeat in sets of three or four squeezes throughout the day, anytime, anywhere. Concentrate on the sensations of tension and lifting, relaxing and lowering within the pelvis.

Trunk Roll

Five to ten times.

1. Lie on back with hips flexed, knees bent, shins parallel to the ceiling and arms on floor straight out from your sides. Feet may be off the floor, or alternatively on the floor.
2. Keeping shoulders down and knees together, roll legs over to the left, touching left leg on the floor.

3. Roll legs back to the starting point, and then to the right. Make sure knees are not bent too close to the chest.

Push Away

Start with five, increase to twenty.

1. Stand with hands on wall slightly farther apart than shoulder width. Move feet back from wall about two to three feet. Hold arms and body straight, and tuck hips under body.
2. Lean toward wall allowing arms to bend. Touch one cheek to the wall.
3. Push body [still straight] away by straightening arms. Do not arch your back. Hands should stay in contact with wall at all times.

Exercises to Avoid

If you are pregnant, avoid the following exercises and heed precautions until after delivery.

1. Double Leg Raise - [any exercises which both legs are raised or lowered together]; this exercise puts too much strain on the lower back and on the ever thinning abdominal muscles. In fact, double leg raises are not recommended for anyone, pregnant or not.
2. Full Sit-ups - They can strain the lower back. Also, in pregnancy, a full sit-up may pull on the round ligaments in front of the uterus, causing a sharp, off to the side abdominal or groin pain. Halfway up and halfway back is enough to strengthen abdominals anytime.
3. Any Exercises That Causes Swayback. [Requires that you arch your back].
4. Humping, Hopping, Skipping, and Bouncing. These may cause pain and strain in hip and pelvic joints, especially in late pregnancy. If you are in an instructor-led class for non-pregnant persons, perform these movements with one foot firmly on the ground, don't try to be the perfect example or "Superwoman and pregnant to"; be sensitive and listen to the messages your body sends you.
5. Exercise/Dance Movements that Require Good Balance and Quick Moves. Your centre of gravity shifts as the baby grows, and all joints [including knees and ankles] are looser and less stable.
6. Any exercise that requires you to be on your back for a prolonged period of time [over one minute].

