

15 RULES TO CONSIDER REGARDING EXERCISING WHILE PREGNANT

DO SOME WALKING AND STRETCHING

Don't sit on the couch the minute your workout ends. If you do, you'll feel sore and stiff soon after. After your workout ends, try to find time to take a five minute walk to cool down your muscles. When that's done, do some gentle stretching. Your muscles will thank you the next day.

STAY AWAY FROM HEAT

Because of our increased metabolic rate when we're pregnant, we should stay away from exercising in hot or humid weather. You might overheat and end up dehydrated, dizzy or having trouble breathing

MOVE AROUND -- DON'T STAND STILL

Exercises like yoga are good for pregnant women because they help us stay limber and more flexible. Plus, they feel good and can be energizing. But make sure you're not holding those poses for too long. Standing still for too long in pregnancy can decrease your blood flow, which in turn can lower your blood pressure and make you feel lightheaded.

STAY HYDRATED

Drinking enough water is important when you're exercising and after you're done. You don't want to become dehydrated, which is a real possibility if you're a heavy sweater or it's warm out. Instead of counting ounces, which can be hard to remember with the effects of the forgetful pregnancy brain, keep tabs on your urine color. If you see it's darker

DON'T SKIMP ON THE CALORIES

Pregnancy isn't a time when you should be losing weight. Make sure you're eating enough calories to support your baby's nutritional needs as well as your own. Keep in mind that if you're exercising you'll need a little more food than you normally would.

ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Before you begin to exercise, you need to get clearance from your OB provider. It doesn't require a special office visit. Ask your doctor when you are at a regular prenatal appointment if there is any reason you shouldn't be exercising. Most moms-to-be can safely incorporate exercise into their schedules.

CHANGE EXERCISES AS YOUR BODY CHANGES

What may have seemed easy for you during early pregnancy can seem challenging as your belly expands and you become a little more breathless. Be prepared to adjust your routine accordingly. You may find yourself swapping your daily run for a walk during later pregnancy and that's perfectly okay. A brisk walk is still better than nothing.

DON'T JUMP TO YOUR FEET

You don't want to faint or risk falling because you've changed positions too quickly. So whatever activity you're doing, take it slow when you go from sitting to standing positions.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew with your exercises. You shouldn't feel like you have to crawl back into your house afterward — if you do, reduce the intensity or duration of the exercise.

STAY OFF YOUR BACK

To be on the safe side and avoid any dizziness that position can cause, you're best off to stay off your back, particularly during abdominal exercises, yoga, and pilates.

DON'T GO FROM ZERO TO HERO

You don't want to go from sitting down right into a hard workout with no warm-up time in between. That's asking for more soreness the next day and your muscles will feel tighter after the workout ends too. Start with some milder exercise to warm up your body first, like walking.

KEEP YOUR CLOTHES LOOSE

It's best to avoid the form-fitting workout clothes that you probably favored pre-pregnancy. Go for loose-fitting clothes that let a lot of air circulate. You'll stay cooler as you exercise so you'll feel more comfortable and stay safer.

STAY WITH DOCTOR-APPROVED SPORTS

You might have been an avid skier before you became pregnant, but you're going to have to hold off on that activity until after your baby is born. It's just not safe. You should avoid any exercise where you risk falling because you can hurt your baby

STAY AWAY FROM HIGH-ALTITUDE ACTIVITIES

You should try to stay under 6,000 feet when it comes to elevation because it can be harder to breathe at higher elevations — you're already having that problem just being pregnant. It's not smart to aggravate it by throwing high elevation into the mix. While hiking with a friend can be a great form of exercise, you don't want to risk elevation sickness by climbing too high. You should also pass on scuba diving because of the change in pressure.