

Can I Exercise During Pregnancy?

Surprisingly, many ladies are fearful of exercising during pregnancy. Gone are the days when we were told to rest in bed as if we had an illness.

Comprehensive studies and recent research show that women and foetus can benefit from exercise throughout pregnancy. Common sense and some basic knowledge are important before starting or continuing a fitness programme.

Before embarking always consult your GP first to check that your pregnancy does not need medical supervision. Beginning a vigorous exercise routine is not wise at this stage. However, maintaining your present fitness levels or beginning a gentle exercise regime can be a smart move. The ideal exercise programme for you depends upon your entry fitness level during conception. The progression of this fitness routine needs continual observation and modification.

What Exercise can I do?

Swimming, walking, jogging, Pilates, pre-natal yoga, weight training and aerobic classes (some classes will need modifying). The type of exercise you choose to do will also depend upon your stage of pregnancy. Sports to avoid are those which put you or the foetus at risk like rock climbing, horse riding, skiing, gymnastics and cycling in the later stages of pregnancy. Due to lack of conclusive research women are advised throughout pregnancy and particularly in the first trimester to avoid an excessive elevated body temperature.

For Beginners:

Most guidelines advocate a maximal heart rate of 60-70% for women who are sedentary prior to pregnancy. Ideally you will start with around approximately 15 minutes of three times a week increasing to a 30 minute session four times a week or daily. The "talk test", which is a visual rating of perceived exertion, is a popular and efficient way of assessing your exercise intensity. Being able to maintain a conversation whilst exercising indicates you are at a comfortable intensity. Increased activity is the goal not peak performance or competition status during pregnancy.

Maintaining Fitness:

Ladies who are already fit and used to regular or very high intensity workouts can continue whilst exercising caution and by being sensible. Be aware of the changes within your body and respond immediately to any warning signs. A maximal heart rate of 60-90% is advocated. You will experience a loss of fitness levels, mobility and overall energy as the pregnancy progresses. Pelvic girdles and supports are advisable to assist in supporting the joints which are more susceptible to injury.

With the ladies that I work with that do not have any complications with their pregnancy I design a programme combining some aerobic activity

For more information, on line pre-natal exercise videos and pregnancy fitness wear visit www.kathybellfitness.co.uk