

beautiful bodies

YOU DON'T NEED TO RUN MARATHONS TO STAY FIT DURING PREGNANCY...IN FACT, WE DON'T ADVISE IT! PHYSIOTHERAPISTS **LAUREN GABRIEL & LISA CARR** FROM PREGGI BELLIES* EXPLAIN THE BEST KINDS OF EXERCISE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



Pregnancy can be the perfect time to embark on an exercise program that sets you and your baby on a healthy pathway for life. Exercising safely can help with pelvic instability, lower back pain, sensible weight gain, an easier less complicated labour and improved bone density. The mental health benefits are well-known too - exercise plays an important role in curbing depression and improving general feelings of well-being.

But did you know that exercise will also help your growing bub? Babies born to women who exercise safely at least three times per week cope better during the stress of labour and have larger placentas, which provide them with increased oxygen supply during pregnancy. Exercise during pregnancy can also help to prevent gestational diabetes in pregnant women as well as Type 2 diabetes in their children.

Ideally, an exercise program should include a combination of cardiovascular and strength work. It's good to stay as active as possible but some activities are not recommended for pregnant

women. These include: outdoor cycling, rollerblading, contact sports, trampolining or activities that carry a risk of falling. If you play a competitive sport, ask your doctor when you should stop.

Water exercise - like swimming, hydrotherapy or aqua-aerobics - give pregnant women a decent cardiovascular workout without excessive forces on the pelvis. Ball-based exercise is also ideal. These types of exercises use the abdominal muscles, which provide support for the spine and pelvis and help prevent pelvic and low back pain. The ball is also an excellent medium for allowing pregnant women to do cardiovascular exercise without the impact of standing forms of exercise.

With the release of the hormone 'relaxin' during pregnancy, our ligaments - which normally support the joints - soften and loosen. This means more movement is available within the joints, leaving them more vulnerable to injury. Strength training works on the muscles supporting the joints and also improves posture. Better posture can in turn help women suffering



Preggi Bellies

favourites

EXERCISES WITH THE BALL

BALL/WALL SQUAT

Place the ball in the small of your back against a wall. Ensure your feet are out in front of your body with toes facing forward and weight through your heels. Wiggle toes to ensure correct position. Ball should be in contact with your back at all times. Bend knees and sit back into squat and allow ball to roll down the wall as you squat. Straighten legs to return to starting position.



BALL/WALL PUSH UP

Rest ball against wall. Put hands on either side of ball to embrace it and squeeze inwards. Knees away from ball. Draw abdominals in, maintain a neutral spine. Bend elbows and lower chest towards ball.



HAMSTRING LIFT

Lie on back with lower legs supported on ball, hands out wide to support. Tilt pelvis using hamstring and buttocks to lift bottom off floor.



EXERCISES WITHOUT A BALL



BIRD DOG

Four point kneeling. Keep spine level, lift one arm straight ahead of you and opposite leg straighten behind. Hold for 10 seconds and change sides without wobbling.

KNEE LIFT

Four point kneeling. Lift knees off the floor 2 inches, keeping knees bent to 90 degrees. Hold off the floor for 4 seconds and rest; repeat.



CLAM

Lie on your side, knees bent and together, feet off floor behind you. Draw deep abdominals in, maintain hip position forward. Do not roll backwards. Open knees and close.

backache, pelvic pain and pelvic floor problems. Any exercise program should ideally include weight lifting/resisted strength training for the upper body and leg work.

Another important element should be core stability training. Core stability refers to the group of muscles in the torso that are responsible for your spine/pelvic stability. Your core stability will be undermined over the course of a pregnancy and as your belly grows, abdominal and core stabilising muscles do not work as well to stabilise your spine and pelvis – especially if they were weak to begin with.

Work out wisely

However, keeping your abdominals and core muscles as strong as possible throughout pregnancy will give maximal support to your pelvis and spine during pregnancy and afterwards and often means a faster recovery after the birth.

Walking is free and can be done any time but can sometimes contribute to pelvic and lower back pain. This is because during walking, the pelvic joints move in a repetitive fashion with the alternating strides required for walking long distances. In addition there is minimal abdominal muscle involvement during walking so it's not the most ideal type of exercise for pregnancy. If walking works for you, remember to keep working your abdominal muscles at the same time by activating your 'core' (many women find the easiest way to do this is to try and imagine flattening your belly button against your spine).

Yoga involves active stretching, keeping muscles elongated and strong and encouraging a sense of

POST-NATAL EXERCISE

It is far easier to return to exercise after your baby is born if you were exercising whilst pregnant. You can begin pelvic floor work and gentle core work 24 hours after giving birth but ideally you should wait until you have had your post-natal check up with your doctor before beginning a more intense workout.

The return to exercise post labour should take into account the tremendous work that your body went through giving birth. Your abdominal muscles are weak and stretched and you may have had tearing. Cardiovascular workouts on the mediBall™ are a comfortable way of returning to exercise in your first workouts post-birth.

Women who have had a natural childbirth with no complication can return to exercise sooner (3-6 weeks) than women who required caesars or episiotomies (6-8 weeks with doctor's consent). If you can manage it, take your baby for daily pram walks. Avoid any heavy lifting initially to protect weakened pelvic floor and abdominal muscles. Running and high-impact aerobic classes should be avoided until you are at least 12 weeks post-natal.

well-being. Pilates focuses on core stability training while working on a Swiss ball (we recommend mediBalls™ in particular), increases cardiovascular fitness, strength and core stability. Avoid exercises that involve lying on your back if they make you feel uncomfortable or light-

headed. Most exercise programs can be modified to adapt to a range of pregnancy conditions such as pelvic instability, knee problems and pelvic floor weakness.

You can continue to exercise until delivery day provided there is no medical reason for you to stop. But

Avoid exercises that involve lying on your back if they make you feel light-headed

headed. The weight of your baby can compress your main artery, lowering your blood pressure.

Discuss with your doctor or midwife any plans to exercise when pregnant. These professionals are usually supportive of exercise at this time but for some medical conditions, exercise may not be ideal.

When choosing your type of exercise consider the benefits of selecting a program that is supervised by professionals who work within

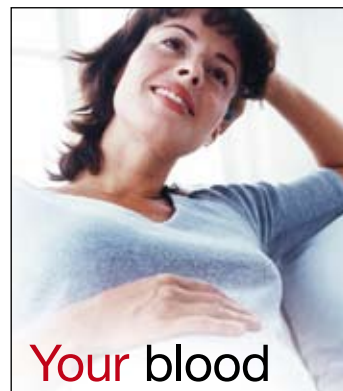
the field of pregnancy. Always keep your trainers informed of any changes to your pregnancy or your health - no matter how small.

Be sure to exercise safely by working in a well-ventilated room and drinking water throughout your workout. Avoid exercise if you have a fever. If at any stage during exercise you feel exhausted, in pain or experience bleeding or spotting you should stop immediately and consult your doctor.

Take the time to commit to an appropriate, regular pregnancy exercise program. Your baby and body will reap the rewards! ♪

MAIN POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- **Pelvic Joints:** Always include core stability and abdominal work in any exercise program.
- **Pelvic Floor:** Avoid high-impact activities. Learn how to do your pelvic floor work correctly and see your women's health physiotherapist if you have any leaking.
- **Abdominals:** Core stability work is vital to any program, best done on the 'ball' or in the water and guided by a physiotherapist.
- **Back health:** Don't lift anything too heavy. Exercises to strengthen your legs, arms and abs will protect your back.
- **Posture:** Always hold your tummy in as if trying to 'hug' your baby when you walk or stand. Keep your shoulders back and try not to slouch. Exercise will also improve posture and help you avoid headaches and backache.



Your blood is your baby's lifeblood

DURING PREGNANCY YOUR BABY RELIES ON ALL OF ITS NUTRIENTS FROM THE NUTRIENTS AVAILABLE IN YOUR BLOOD. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU ENSURE THESE ESSENTIAL NUTRIENT LEVELS ARE MAINTAINED. THAT'S WHERE FLORADIX LIQUID HERBAL IRON EXTRACT CAN BE OF ASSISTANCE.

If you want to help maintain the health and vitality of your baby and yourself, you will be making sure that you are eating all the right things, making sure you get enough rest and... iron. It is well known that iron supplementation during pregnancy is often recommended.

The trouble is iron is difficult for the body to absorb. That's where a liquid supplement can be of assistance. Floradix contains a source of iron balanced with a range of B Vitamins and Vitamin C as well as other nutri-rich herbs.

Floradix is a special liquid formula that:

- Contains iron in a soluble form
- Contains no artificial colouring or preservatives
- Is free of alcohol
- Contains Vitamin C
- Contains natural herbal extracts high in anti-oxidants
- Contains Vitamins B1, B2, B6 and B12

Always read the label and use only as directed

Floradix has been used worldwide for over 60 years - improving women's energy and health



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***PREGGI BELLIES is an exercise program for pregnant and post-natal women. Designed and run by physiotherapists (and mums) Lauren Gabriel and Michelle Gray, it operates in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. The program is designed for all levels of fitness and uses step, weights and mediBalls™. In 10 years, Preggi Bellies has trained more than 10,000 pregnant women. www.preggibellies.com.au or 1300 727 171**

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