

Keep fit for pregnancy and childbirth

Keeping fit during pregnancy will assist you to cope more easily with the demands of pregnancy, labour and parenthood. Aim to exercise for 20-30 minutes every day, provided you feel well and comfortable.

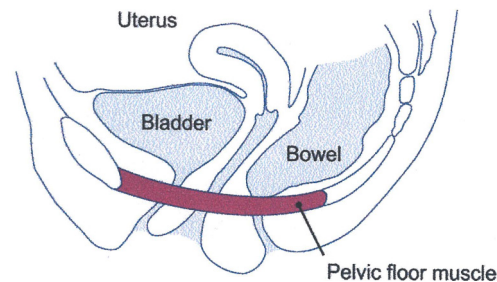
- **Exercise** can include activities such as walking along a flat area, swimming, yoga, pilates or exercise bike.
- **AVOID** jolting activities, eg. jogging, contact sports, water skiing or horse riding.
- Work at a moderate intensity while pregnant. Exercise slowly, smoothly, without straining or discomfort.
- **Talk Test:** while exercising you should feel that you are able to easily keep talking. Avoid holding your breath.
- If you experience pain while exercising, stop that exercise and speak to your physiotherapist. **DO NOT PUSH THROUGH PAIN.**
- Do not exercise in hot conditions, or if you have a fever, as your body can overheat.
- Wear loose fitting clothing that 'breathes', avoiding synthetic fibres. Maintain adequate fluid intake.

For more information on exercising in pregnancy ask your physiotherapist.

1. Good Posture – standing

Yes	No	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feet – centre your weight towards your heels • Knees and buttocks soft, not locked or tight • Lower abdominals important – slightly draw in at 'hip line' • Rib cage lifted • Shoulder blades pressed down and in towards lower back • Back of neck long with chin tucked in
<p>NB maintain good trunk posture in all exercises and positions.</p>		

2. Pelvic Floor Exercise



Your pelvic floor muscles are at the base of your pelvis supporting your pelvic organs. They also control your bladder, birth canal (vagina) and bowel openings.

While standing, sitting or lying, tighten (squeeze) and lift up your pelvic floor muscles, hold this contraction for 3 to 5 seconds, always breathing gently, then relax these muscles completely. You should feel a definite letting go. Rest for 5 seconds before you repeat the exercise. Repeat 6 to 10 times. Gradually increase the length of hold, aiming eventually for 10 seconds hold. This is one set. Aim for 3 sets daily.

Coughs and sneezes exert great pressure on your pelvic floor muscles, It is good practice to quickly tighten your pelvic floor muscles before you cough or sneeze.



3. Buttock Stretch

Sit safely on the edge of a chair. Place one ankle on your thigh. Keeping your back straight, lean forward from the hips until you feel a stretch in the buttock of your bent leg. Hold for 30 seconds each leg.

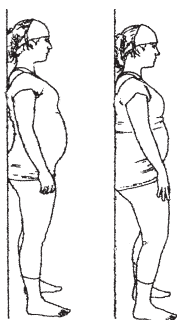
4. Upper Back Strengthener



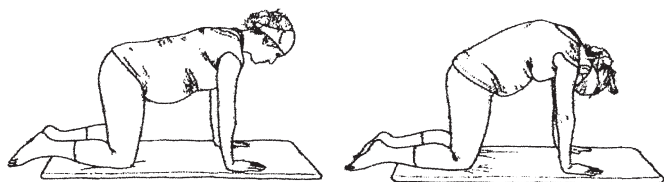
Stand or sit with a straight back. Lift your arms to the 'stop' position with your elbows at shoulder height. Press your elbows back several times. Feel your muscles working between your shoulder blades. Relax. Bend forwards and hug yourself. Repeat 3 to 5 times.

5. Pelvic Tilt

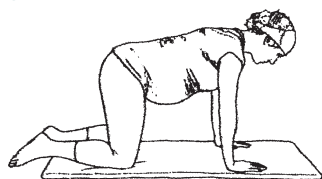
a) Stand against a wall with your knees slightly bent, tighten your tummy muscles, tuck your buttocks under, flattening your back against the wall. The natural hollow of your back should have disappeared. Breathe normally while you hold for several seconds. Relax. Repeat 6 to 10 times.



b) On all 4s, pull your tummy muscles in tightly and round your back, pushing up through your shoulders. Feel your back stretching. Hold for several seconds. Relax to a flat back. Repeat 6 to 10 times



6. Spinal Stabilization: using your core muscles

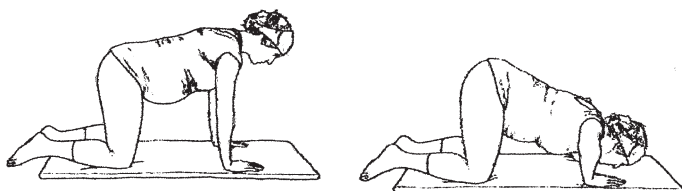


On all 4s, with a straight spine. Focus on your lower tummy, at your hip line. Draw in your lower tummy very slightly, hold while you breathe gently about 5 breaths. Keeping your spine

still and straight, relax your tummy. Have a normal breath and then repeat 8 to 10 times. You can do this in other positions, eg standing, sitting. Your spine should be straight.

7. Push ups

On all 4s, with your hands under your shoulders. Keep breathing while you do 10 push ups.



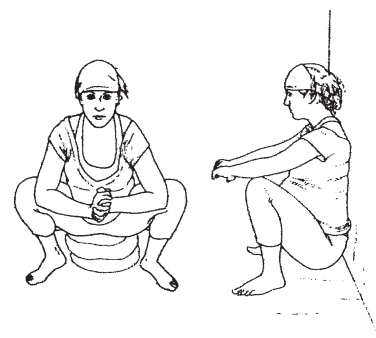
8. Calf stretch

Stand with one leg in front of the other, with both feet pointing straight ahead. Lean forwards onto your front leg, leaving the heel of your back foot on the ground. Your back is straight too. This stretches the calf muscle of your back leg. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat with other leg.

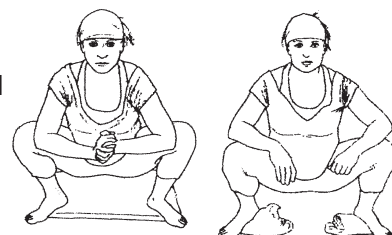


9. Squatting

If you cannot squat easily, do this exercise with your back supported against a wall, or sit on a low stool or a cushion/beanbag. Begin with 1/2 minute and gradually increase to 2 minutes.



NB. After squatting and before you stand up, sit down, stretch and shake your legs to restore circulation and then stand up.



If you have varicose veins in your legs or pelvic floor area, only practice supported squatting (on a low stool or cushion).

For more information

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.