

Physical Activity Guidelines

- ▶ If you are not used to being physically active, start gently and gradually build up.
- ▶ Regular physical activity (at least three times a week) is better than the occasional burst.
- ▶ Don't start a new sport during pregnancy. Continue a sport you enjoy if this is considered safe for you.
- ▶ Always warm up for 5-10 minutes before starting. This will loosen your muscles and help prevent injury. After your activities cool down with gentle stretches.
- ▶ Eat enough to provide energy for yourself and your growing baby. Don't rely on your appetite as a guide. Monitor your food intake to ensure you are getting enough calories.
- ▶ Wear a good support bra, loose clothing and supportive shoes.
- ▶ Avoid jarring, jumping and other high-impact activity.
- ▶ Avoid very strenuous exercise or reaching a point of exhaustion.
- ▶ Set aside time for daily rest, especially when you feel tired.
- ▶ Don't over-exert yourself in very hot weather.
- ▶ If you experience any of the following things, stop your activity and see your doctor or midwife urgently: vaginal bleeding or fluid discharge, pain, dizziness, fainting, persistent contractions or a reduction in your baby's movements.

SPARC

Push Play is a nationwide SPARC campaign to get more people more active more often. The campaign aims to increase awareness about the benefits of regular, moderate, physical activity – and how easy it is to get active.

Push Play is based on the fact that even small amounts of activity give health benefits. We recommend adults do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a day and kids (aged 5-18 years) do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity a day.

Push Play says

- ▶ physical activity is fun
- ▶ it is easy to be active
- ▶ physical activity is good for everyone
- ▶ it is never too late to start being active
- ▶ any activity is better than none
- ▶ it doesn't have to be hard to be good for you

SPARC (Sport & Recreation New Zealand) is the Crown Entity charged with promoting, encouraging and supporting sport and physical recreation in New Zealand. For more information visit www.sparc.org.nz.

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0800 **ACTIVE** (0800 22 84 83)

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PUSH PLAY

Pregnancy and Activity

Push Play,
get active
and feel great!

**A safe guide to
being active during pregnancy**

Pregnant?

Naturally you are wondering how pregnancy and childbirth will affect your sport and fitness level. And it will! Pregnancy makes physical and emotional demands on you, so it is important to look after yourself. Physical activity can help you stay as healthy as possible.

Maybe you are already fit and would like to maintain your healthy habits. Or maybe you see pregnancy as a time to get off the sofa and develop a more active lifestyle.

Whatever your situation, being fit will help you feel well and relaxed during pregnancy and labour, and speed your recovery after the birth.

Moderate physical activity taken regularly during pregnancy is safe and beneficial for most women.

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Why be active during pregnancy?

The benefits. Physical activity:

- ▶ maintains (and even improves) heart and lung fitness needed for labour.
- ▶ improves muscular strength in preparation for carrying your baby, the car seat and other baby equipment!
- ▶ improves posture which helps you avoid the backache common in pregnancy.
- ▶ may reduce the length of labour, and the need for intervention and pain relief.
- ▶ can ease problems common in pregnancy such as leg cramps, high blood pressure and constipation.
- ▶ improves circulation, which helps to prevent varicose veins.
- ▶ helps you avoid putting on excess weight.
- ▶ improves your stamina during pregnancy and for the sleepless nights ahead!
- ▶ helps you feel good about yourself.



The risks...

Any physical activity programme carries risks as well as benefits.

Risks in pregnancy can include reduced blood supply to the baby, low blood sugar, overheating the baby, premature labour, dizziness or fainting, and strains and sprains.

But remember – the benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks in a realistic and well-managed programme.

When should I avoid physical activity?

Discuss your proposed activity programme with your doctor, midwife or caregiver. Some conditions may prevent you being too active during pregnancy.

These conditions include high blood pressure while pregnant, a history of miscarriages, premature rupture of the membranes, a weak cervix, premature labour in this or previous pregnancies, multiple pregnancy (of twins or more), persistent bleeding after the third month of pregnancy, and low blood count. Some women may be advised to take extra rest and not to exercise at all.

Aim to be physically active for a total of 30 minutes on most if not all days of the week. This could be in three 10-minute sessions.

What activities can I do?

What you do during pregnancy may not be the same as your sister or friend does. Be flexible and realistic. Your ability and skill level will change as your baby grows and your weight redistributes. Listen to your body. If you're tired – put your feet up!

- ▶ **Walking** – Great. Even a kilometre (10 minutes) a day will ease aching legs and sore backs, and help you maintain physical fitness. Take it slowly and rest as often as you need.
- ▶ **Jogging** – Good if you enjoy it, but some women find it too uncomfortable as they get bigger.

Loss of bladder control may also be a problem.

- ▶ **Swimming** – Excellent. Swimming is easy on your body because the water supports most of your extra weight. Water should be of average temperature. It is safe while the pregnancy sac membranes are intact and there is no threat of premature labour.

- ▶ **Low-impact aerobics, exercise programmes and yoga** are fine. Some gyms run classes specifically for pregnant women. Yoga can be good too, but take time to find the right class and avoid excessive stretching as your ligaments are softened by the hormones of pregnancy.



What should I avoid?

Avoid water-skiing, contact sports, trampolining, gymnastics and strenuous anaerobic exercise like sprinting or squash. Some sports may affect the oxygen supply to the baby - so avoid scuba diving, high mountain climbing or others that involve changes in pressure or high altitudes.

After the birth...

Start pelvic floor exercises as soon as you feel able. If you have maintained your fitness throughout your pregnancy you should be able to return to light aerobic activities fairly quickly. Some women can do so within days of an uncomplicated delivery – others may take a few weeks.

- ▶ If you have had a caesarean section you may have to wait three or four weeks before doing anything more than simple activities.
- ▶ If you are breast feeding and being very active you will have to eat well and drink large amounts of fluid to keep producing milk.
- ▶ If you do this, your activity level should not affect the amount of milk you produce.

