

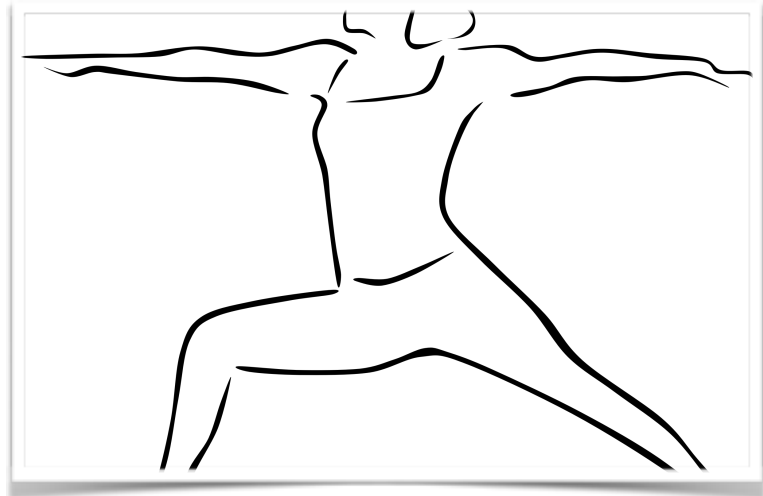
BODY MOVEMENT

During Pregnancy

Benefits

Pregnant or not, everyone should aim for 150 minutes a week of exercise. The minimum for pregnancy is 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity, three times a week. The benefits of regular body movements can be felt almost immediately:

- Mood enhancer, preventing depression
- Energizes by oxygenating your blood
- Reduces risk for gestational diabetes and hypertension
- Relieves pelvic cramping, lower backache, ligament pain
- Relieves constipation
- Prevents swelling of the extremities by increasing circulation
- Tones your muscles to prepare for birth
- Assists in a faster postpartum recovery



Move your body joyously

Your changing body during pregnancy can be a time of pride and enjoyment with the addition of regular activity and movement. Instead of feeling like you are living in someone else's body, spending time thinking about how your body feels when it is moving causes you to feel comfortable and at ease in your own skin. As you exercise, think about how your body is moving with and around your baby. This is a great way to bond!

Birth Preparation

One of the most important benefits of prenatal exercise is preparation for the physically demanding work of birth. Much of birth is learning to relax muscles. Periods of exercise followed by a restful soak in the tub or mindful relaxation helps you to identify these muscles so that you can release them during labor. Finally the pushing stage comes and the strength and endurance that you have built up during pregnancy will be rewarded by a shorter pushing phase with less exhaustion.

Exercises to Avoid

- Any movement that directly stresses the abdominal muscles (sit-ups)
- Exercise on concrete surfaces
- Activities requiring jumping or jarring motions that increase risk of fall due to change in your center of gravity
- Stretching to the point of pain or maximum resistance
- Any activity that is significantly more than your normal activity level without a gradual rise
- Any exercise that is causing pain, spotting, or contractions

Sources:

- Davis, E. (2012). *Heart & hands*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- Frye, A. (1995). *Holistic midwifery*. Portland: Labrys Press.
- King, T., Brucker, M., Fahey, J., Kriebs, J., Geger, C., Varney, H., & Varney, H. (2015) *Varney's midwifery*. Burlington: Jones & Bartlett Publishing.
- Romm, A. *The natural pregnancy book* (3rd ed.). New York: Ten Speed Press.

Exercises to Try

- Walking and swimming are fantastic exercises for pregnant women
- Yoga (watch this podcast or find local classes at www.mamasteyoga.com)
- Zumba Dance classes (find a local class at www.zumba.com)
- Your local YMCA offers affordable family memberships and scholarships (plus childcare!) Weight bearing equipment and personal trainers are available, plus a variety of classes. www.ymca.net
- Find National Parks for hiking and walking trails at www.us-parks.com

Pelvic Floor Exercises

The ability to consciously relax the pelvic muscles will facilitate an easiest passage of your baby through these tissues. Toning these muscles during pregnancy can have an affect on their health after your baby is born.

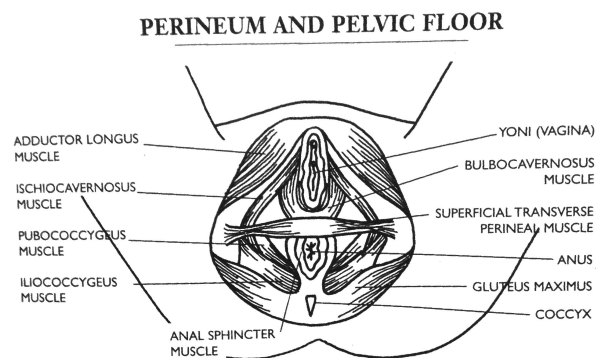


image credit: The Natural Pregnancy Book, Romm

You can begin to identify these muscles by stopping the stream of urine while sitting on the toilet. Then think of the birth canal as an elevator, tightening from floor to floor as you slowly work your way up, and then back down. You can do 50-100 of these per day.

Another great way to tone the pelvic floor is **squatting!** Imagine that you are squatting at the river to wash your laundry as many traditional cultures do. **Work up to 10 minutes per day.**