

Being active during pregnancy

If you have a healthy, normal pregnancy, keeping active while you are pregnant is good for your health and the health of your baby.





Physical activity

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If you're already active, continue to maintain at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.

Staying active can help prepare your body for labour, give you more energy, improve your mood and relieve aches and pains.

A good way to make sure you aren't pushing yourself too hard is to do the 'Talk test'. Make sure you can hold a conversation while you exercise.



If you weren't active before getting pregnant, it's not too late to start, but it's best to talk to your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) first.

Start gently and build up to at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Remember, some activity is better than none!



Extra care

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Some things to remember and take extra care with:



Exercise within your limits: don't exercise to the point of exhaustion



Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity



Use a good support bra (not an underwire bra), along with loose clothing and supportive footwear



Being pregnant increases your body temperature, so take extra care not to overheat in hot or humid weather



Pregnancy hormones can give your ligaments extra flexibility, so take care not to overstretch



The extra weight puts added strain on your joints and muscles, making it easier to injure yourself.



As your pregnancy progresses, your growing baby changes your centre of gravity. This can affect balance during activities such as cycling or yoga.

Activity

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What types of physical activity are okay?

- » Swimming or aquarobics in water under 32°C (not in a hydrotherapy pool)
- » Household chores such as vacuuming or gardening
- » Strength-based exercises such as using light weights
- » Walking/jogging. Remember the 'Talk test'
- » Yoga/Pilates modified for pregnancy
- » Pregnancy exercise classes
- » Pelvic floor muscle exercises



Remember to listen to your body. If an activity is causing you discomfort, headache or pain, or you are feeling dizzy, faint or out of breath, stop immediately and talk to your lead maternity carer.

Some conditions, such as high blood pressure, may prevent you being too active during pregnancy.
Your LMC will be able to advise you.

Caution

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While pregnant it's best to avoid:

- ⚠ Exercising in very hot humid conditions, such as hot yoga
- ⚠ Scuba diving
- ⚠ Contact sports or those with the risk of getting hit in the stomach, such as football, netball or martial arts
- ⚠ Physical activity with a risk of falling, such as horse-riding or skiing
- ⚠ Any physical activity lying on your back, especially after the first trimester, as the weight of your growing baby puts pressure on major blood vessels and could cause dizziness
- ⚠ In the later stages of pregnancy, activities that involve jumping, frequent changes of direction and excessive stretching, such as gymnastics or trampolining.

Returning to physical activity after pregnancy

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It's best to talk to your LMC before you return to physical activity after the birth of your child. If you have maintained your fitness throughout your pregnancy, you should be able to return to light activity fairly quickly after birth. If you have a Caesarean section, you will need to wait for clearance from your LMC or doctor.

For more information, visit:

- thehub.sia.govt.nz/resources/food-and-nutrition-guidelines-for-healthy-pregnant-and-breastfeeding-women-a-background-paper
- healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/pregnancy-maternity
- healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/pregnancy-maternity/having-a-healthy-pregnancy/exercise
- healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/pregnancy-maternity/having-a-healthy-pregnancy/healthy-eating-during-pregnancy
- healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/pregnancy-maternity/lead-maternity-carers
- kidshealth.org.nz/parenting-babies-children/pregnancy-childbirth-the-first-weeks
- healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/pregnancy-maternity/breastfeeding
- lalecheleague.org.nz
- midwife.org.nz
- physio.org.nz
- continence.org.nz/pelvic-floor