



*Chinnor-based
personal fitness
trainer
Hilary Westall
explores exercise*

*and one-to-one training for
people needing more specialized
exercise considerations.*



Gone are the days when being pregnant meant being told to put your feet up and rest. Research is increasingly showing that not only does it make for an easier pregnancy and delivery, but your baby is more likely to be healthier at birth. Hilary Westall guides mums-to-be in the right direction.

How fit are you now?

Regular exercisers can generally continue well into pregnancy provided that appropriate modifications are made to their existing regime. The key throughout pregnancy is to listen to your body and stay at a comfortable workout pace.

Blooming fit

If you're relatively inactive, now is not the time to throw yourself into a frenzy of exercise, so seek advice before starting anything your body isn't used to. Beginners should start with a gentle walking programme with some light resistance work and stretches. Swimming and specialised antenatal aerobics are also excellent forms of exercise.

Before you start

If any of these conditions apply to you, or you are unsure, seek advice from your GP or midwife first.

- History of miscarriage
- Heart problems
- Congenital defects
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Asthma or other lung problems
- Muscular / joint problems
- Multiple pregnancy
- Bleeding during pregnancy
- Incompetent cervix

Some dos and don'ts

There are some basic guidelines that should be followed to ensure your safety and that of your unborn baby.

- DO drink plenty of water and keep cool. Your body temperature affects your baby, so do not allow yourself to overheat.
- DON'T exercise in very hot or humid conditions.
- DON'T undertake activities which involve heavy lifting and twisting; high impact activities unless you are completely comfortable with them; activities with a high risk of injury; and scuba diving.
- DO continue with abdominal, pelvic floor and core work during pregnancy.
- DO avoid exercising on your back after the first trimester.

- DO eat enough to fuel your workouts.
- If you experience pain at the front of your pelvis, DON'T do straddling movements, such as breaststroke legs, wide squats or side leg lifts, and speak to your GP or midwife.
- DON'T over-stretch. Early in pregnancy, the hormone Relaxin is released in the body. Joints and muscles can be easily strained if you exceed your limits.
- DO inform the fitness instructor that you are pregnant before taking part in a class.
- DO wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing, well-fitting trainers and a supportive sports bra.
- DO stop exercise immediately if you experience undue breathlessness, pain, dizziness, bleeding, cramps, headache or chest pain, and seek medical advice.
- DO consider one-to-one instruction to maximise the safety and effectiveness of your workouts.

Which activity is best for you?

In the first trimester, almost any form of exercise can be undertaken safely. During the latter stages of pregnancy, swimming, walking and aqua aerobics are generally more comfortable due to the size of your bump. Functional exercises, such as step-ups, squats, lunges and core stability work are safe and will improve strength.

Exercising in water is safe and enjoyable during pregnancy as the water supports your body, allowing you to be as energetic or as relaxed as you like.

Remember that exercise should make you feel better during pregnancy, so find a routine that works for you. If you can exercise regularly, preferably every day, even if it's only a ten minute walk, you'll be benefiting yourself and giving your baby a healthy head-start in life.

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COMPETITION

Win a FREE one-to-one workout. See page 50