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Advice and exercises during pregnancy

Issued by Physiotherapy Department



The purpose of the leaflet is to offer advice and suggest exercises to help you stay healthy during pregnancy.

Keeping well in pregnancy

Your body will change a great deal during your pregnancy.

If you have any specific back, pelvic or muscle pain your physiotherapist will be able to offer advice.

There are also open access classes for back pain in pregnancy which you can attend. Your physiotherapist can give you details.

Exercise and pregnancy

The benefit of this advice is to improve your general well being and reduce the strain of pregnancy.

Mild to moderate exercise is good for you and your developing baby.

Drink plenty water and avoid overheating when exercising.

Walking and swimming (or aquanatal classes) are excellent.

Stick to familiar activities and remember that it is natural to slow down as your pregnancy progresses.

Listen to your body and avoid any activity which produces pain.

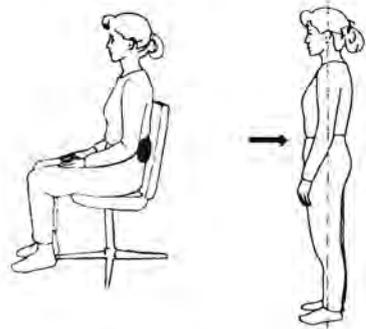
Unfortunately, there are no easy alternatives to practicing exercises.

Minimise strain during pregnancy

The physical changes which occur during pregnancy can cause strain and discomfort. To minimise this risk, here are some suggestions.

Draw in your lower tummy and lift up your pelvic floor muscles to protect and support pelvic organs and spine.

Try to keep the normal balanced curve in your back during all activities.

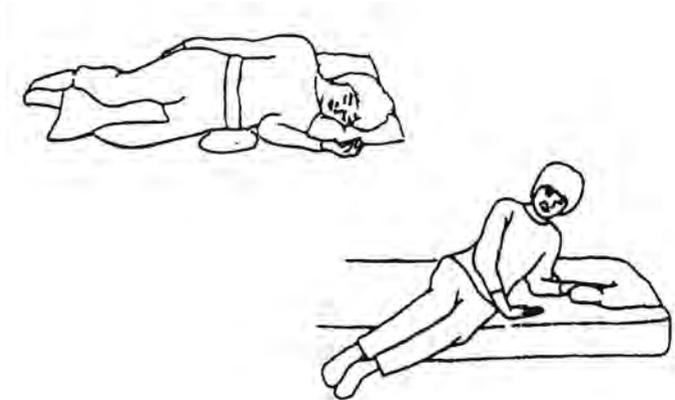


Use a safe lifting technique by bending your knees and not your spine.



Try to work at waist height and avoid bending and twisting your back.

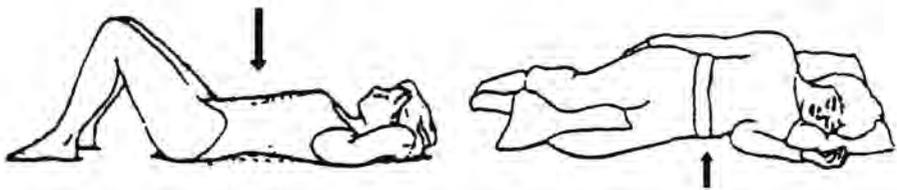
Use pillows to find a comfortable sleeping position and ensure you get in and out of bed by rolling.



Your tummy muscles will stretch and weaken as your baby grows. It is important to exercise these muscles during pregnancy to maintain their strength, support both your back and baby and to maintain good posture.

Tummy bracing

Your tummy muscles act like a corset. The deepest muscles are particularly important in supporting your lower back and pelvis. They can be exercised in any position.



As you breathe out, draw in the lower part of your tummy towards your spine. Keep breathing and hold for up to 10 seconds, then relax.

Repeat up to 10 times. Try to do this several times a day and also brace when you lift, pull or push.

Pelvic tilt

To ease backache and gently tone the muscles - pull in your tummy, tilt your pelvis up and flatten your lower back. Hold for a count of 10, breathing normally, and then relax. Repeat this up to 10 times. Try to do this exercise several times a day, in a lying or standing position.



Pelvic floor muscles

This is the sling of muscles at the floor of your pelvis which supports the pelvic organs, including your womb and baby. They help to control your bladder and bowels and may enhance sexual intercourse. These muscles can become weakened during pregnancy and delivery. This could lead to loss of bladder control.

To help prevent this, you should exercise the pelvic floor muscles regularly.

To exercise these muscles

- Squeeze and lift the muscles around your front and back passages as though stopping yourself from passing wind and trying to stop the flow of urine. Keep breathing normally.
- Hold for as many seconds as you can (up to 10) then relax. Repeat as many times as you can, up to 10.
- Next squeeze and lift the muscles hard and fast, then relax. Repeat as many times as you can, up to 10 times.
- Do this several times a day.

Get into the habit of tightening your lower abdominal and pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing, lifting, pushing and pulling.

Circulation changes

Changes in your hormones when pregnant and changes in the pressure in your abdomen can cause problems with circulation.

To prevent swollen ankles and varicose veins:-

- Lie down with your legs propped up.
- Vigorously exercise your feet up, down and round in circles for at least 30 seconds at a time.
- Tighten your knees and squeeze your buttocks.
- Avoid standing for long periods.
- Consider wearing support tights.



Relaxation and rest

It is important to get a balance between rest and activity. Relaxation is a technique that can help you rest during pregnancy and can be used during labour to help you feel more in control and cope better. It can help reduce or prevent the build up of stress and tension that can occur with a busy life. Your physiotherapist will give you more information and help you practice relaxation.

If you require any further advice please contact an obstetric physiotherapist.

Your physiotherapist is

Contact telephone number

Useful contact numbers

North Tyneside General Hospital

Rake Lane

North Shields NE29 8NH

0344 811 8111, ext 4064

Wansbeck General Hospital

Woodhorn Lane

Ashington NE63 9JJ

0344 811 8111, ext 36010

Hexham General Hospital

Corbridge Road

Hexham NE46 1QJ

0344 811 8111, ext 5031

Alnwick Infirmary

South Road

Alnwick NE66 2NS

(01665) 626 700, ext 6750

Berwick Infirmary

Infirmary Square

Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1LT

(01289) 365 600, ext 6643

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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