

## Physical Activity

### Did you know?

Attitudes to pregnancy have changed over the years. There was a time when expectant moms were encouraged to take it easy and keep their feet up. Medical experts now recommend regular physical activity as beneficial during pregnancy.

### Regular physical activity:

- improves mood and self-image
- helps ensure appropriate weight gain during pregnancy
- helps with relaxation and reducing stress
- promotes better sleep
- increases muscle tone, strength and endurance
- helps build stamina needed for labour and delivery
- promotes faster recovery after labour and delivery
- helps increase energy levels

### Physical activity tips:

- always start easy and progress gradually
- drink lots of water before, during and after physical activity
- don't push yourself too hard. You should be able to carry on a normal conversation while you're being active
- listen to your body; if you're feeling more tired than normal, take it easy and rest for a day
- avoid being active outdoors on overly hot or humid days. Instead, get active indoors in a well-ventilated room

### Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- persistent contractions
- bleeding from the vagina
- increasing back pain, pubic pain, or pain in the abdomen
- sudden swelling of the ankles, hands or face
- dizziness or shortness of breath
- excessive fatigue
- difficulty walking
- changes in usual fetal movement
- swelling, pain, and redness in the calf of one leg

Build physical activity into your daily routine – at home, at school, at work, at play and on the way. The type of activity you choose is up to you, as long as you feel comfortable doing it. Suggested activities are walking, stationary cycling, swimming, aquafit, stair machines and low-impact aerobics. You may need to modify weight-bearing activities such as running, high-impact aerobics, hiking, and tennis or choose alternative activities as your pregnancy progresses.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living ([www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)) recommends a variety of activities from three groups to get the most health benefits: endurance activities, flexibility activities and strength activities. Choose activities that appeal to you.

Get active your way, every day. Everyone can do it!

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. I've never really been active. Should I start now that I'm pregnant?**

Physical activity can make you feel better and be beneficial for both you and your baby. The decision to be active during pregnancy may be the initial step toward a long-lasting healthy way of life for you and for your baby. Speak with your doctor before you begin, so you can talk about different types of activities and cover any questions you may have. Start easy and progress gradually.

### **2. I'm already active, and now I'm pregnant. Can I continue to be active?**

Your body will change dramatically over the nine months of your pregnancy, and your approach to physical activity may have to change too. Talk to your doctor about your activities to assess whether / when you may need to make adjustments. No two pregnancies are alike. What may be a comfortable routine for one woman may not be comfortable for you. Listen to your body as it changes from one month to the next, and do what feels comfortable for you.

### **3. Can I lift weights?**

Weight training is generally safe as long as the resistance is light to moderate. Using heavier weights could put too much stress on muscles and ligaments. Proper controlled breathing is very important. After your fourth month of pregnancy, experts suggest modifying exercises that require lying on your back so they are performed on your side, or while you are standing or sitting.