

Pregnancy Workout

Aerobic

Aerobic or cardio exercise is recommended for pregnant women at 150-300 minutes per week (Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2018). The exercise should not be too hard. Maintain ability to pass the “Talk Test,” meaning you can talk during the activity. During pregnancy hormones can cause your joints to change, so it is best to focus on low-impact or non-jumping exercises. Avoid exercises during pregnancy that require lying flat on your back and those that may cause you to lose your balance, fall or cause abdominal trauma.



March

Stand with feet hip width apart. Lift your left knee even with your hips. Actively place your left foot back to the floor and repeat on the right side. Continue marching in place or take forward or backward steps with each march for added movement. Repeat activity for 1-5 minutes.



Side Step with Heel Kick

Stand with feet slightly wider than hip width apart. Shift your weight to your right foot while lifting your left foot off the floor and kicking your heel up towards your backside. Actively place your left foot back to the floor, shift your weight onto your left foot and repeat the heel kick with your right foot. For additional activity, add movement in your arms in a forward and backward motion with each step. Repeat activity for 1-5 minutes.



Low Impact Jumping Jack

Stand with feet hip width apart. Raise both of your arms out to the side then above your head. While moving your arms, shift your weight to your left foot and kick your right foot out to the side. Actively lower your arms and bring your right leg back to the floor. Repeat with both arms and with kicking your left foot out to the side. This is one full cycle of a low-impact jumping jack. Repeat activity for 1-5 minutes.



Stationary Lunge Pulse

Stand with feet hip width apart. Step your left foot forward so that your feet are about 3 feet apart. Place your weight in your left heel and lower your hips until your left thigh is parallel to the floor and your right knee is hovering just above the ground. Push into your left heel as you raise your hips back up until your legs are straight but not locked. Continue lowering and raising your hips, keeping your weight in your left heel (not your toes) for 1-2 minutes. Repeat on opposite side.



Skier

Stand with feet hip width apart. Step your right foot behind and slightly past your left foot. Lower your hips until you are in a lunge position. Keep your left knee behind your left toes. Try to lower your hips so that you can tap your fingers on the top of your shoe. Push through your left heel and bring your right foot back into standing position. Repeat on the opposite side. Continue alternating sides for 1-5 minutes.

Strength Training

Muscle and bone strengthening exercise is recommended for pregnant women twice per week (Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2018). Strength exercises during pregnancy will strengthen muscles needed for carrying extra weight such as the hips, legs and back. Each exercise can be repeated 8-12 times. Complete a cycle of all exercises 2-3 times. There should be a day of rest between strength training days if strengthening the same muscle groups.



Squat

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms straight out in front, parallel with the floor. Slowly sit back, pushing your hips back and bending your knees until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Briefly pause at the bottom and then return slowly to the standing position. Note: Keep your chest up, weight on your heels, and knees behind your toes throughout the exercise.



Star Squats (no jump)

Stand with feet hip width apart. Lower your hips into a squat position, keeping your back straight, hips back, and knees behind your toes. Push through your heels to straighten your body, raising your arms reaching overhead into a 'star' position. Actively bring your arms back in and lower your hips for another repetition.



Side Lunge

Stand with feet hip width apart. Step your left foot wide to the side. Shift your weight into your left heel, push your hips back, and bend your knee into a squat position while keeping your right leg straight. Push into your left heel to straighten your left leg and step your feet back to the starting position. Repeat on the opposite side.



Sumo Squat into a Deep Squat

Stand with feet wider than shoulder-width apart, arms at your hips, and point your toes out at a 45-degree angle. Squat down, bending your knees until your thighs are parallel with the ground, keeping your weight in your heels. Pause, then push through your heels to straighten your legs. Repeat to continue Sumo Squat strength exercises. From the sumo squat position, lower into a deep squat placing your hips below your knees and your elbows against your calves. Rest in this position for a hip stretch for 60 seconds.



Calf Raise

Stand with feet hip-width apart and knees bent slightly. Keeping your core muscles engaged, chest high and shoulders back and down, raise up onto your toes. Pause for a moment and then slowly lower your weight back down onto your heels. Hold onto a wall, chair or other solid surface to secure your balance if needed.



Shoulder Press

Stand with feet hip-width apart. Hold hand weights in each hand out to your sides with your elbows bent at a 90-degree angle. Keeping your elbows out to the side, press the weights toward the ceiling bringing your hands together as they rise above your head. Keep your core muscles engaged, knees bent slightly and back neutral (not curved). Slowly lower your arms until your elbows reach a 90-degree angle.



Row

Stand with feet hip-width apart and hand weights by your sides. Bend your knees, push your hips back, and lower your torso until you are in a forward-leaning position with your weight in your heels (not your toes). Allow the weights to extend toward the floor in front of you. Keep your palms facing each other, bend your elbows, keeping them alongside your body until they reach a 90-degree angle. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Return your arms back to straight while staying in the forward leaning position.



Bent-Elbow Lateral Raise

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and knees bent slightly. Hold hand weights in each hand. Lift the weight up in front of you so your elbows are bent and by your sides. Keep your arms bent and raise your elbows out to the side until your elbows are even with your shoulders. Lower your elbows back down to your sides.



Reverse Fly

Stand with your feet hip-width apart your knees slightly bent. Hold hand weights by your sides. Assume the same forward-leaning position as the Row exercise with hand weights extended to the floor in front of you. Raise your arms to your sides, engaging your upper back and shoulder muscles. Slowly lower your hands together back to the starting position.



Bicep Curl

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and knees bent slightly. Hold a hand weight in each hand with your palms facing to the front. Keeping your core engaged and elbows next to your sides, lift the weights up toward your shoulders until you can bend your elbow no further. Slowly lower the weights back to your sides until your elbows are straight but not locked.



Triceps Overhead Extension

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and knees bent slightly. Hold one hand weight in both hands. Lift the weight up and directly behind your head. Keep your core engaged and back straight. Keep your elbows close to your ears and extend your arms above your head until your elbows are straight but not locked. Lower the weight until the elbows reach a 90-degree angle then raise the weight back up above your head.



Cow and Cat Hip Tilts

Cow: Kneel on the floor with hands and knees hip width apart. Inhale and drop your belly towards the floor. Lift your chin and chest while looking up toward the ceiling. Widen your shoulder blades and pull your shoulders away from your ears.

Cat: From cow pose, exhale and round your spine toward the ceiling. Keep your shoulders and knees in position. Allow your head to relax towards the floor, but do not force your chin to your chest. Inhale, coming back to neutral "tabletop" position on your hands and knees or continue back into cow pose.



Bird Dog

Kneel on the floor with hands and knees hip width apart. Maintain strength in your core muscles and slowly raise your left arm straight out in front of you while simultaneously lifting and straightening your right leg behind you. Hold with your arm and leg extended for 1-3 seconds and actively bring them back into the starting position. Repeat with the opposite limbs.



Side Lying Walk Up

During pregnancy abdominal muscles can weaken and separate so it is best not to attempt a sit-up. One of the best ways to get up from a lying down position is to lie on your side and walk your torso up with your arms until you reach a seated position.



Core Exercises

Acceptable abdominal exercises that can be safe during the first and second trimesters include:
Seated Leg Reach: Sit on the floor with arms behind you for support and knees bent - keep one foot on the floor at all times - extend one heel out, tap it to the floor and bring it back to the starting position. Repeat on opposite side.

Plank: Kneel on hands and feet. Extend legs behind you so only your hands and toes touch the floor. Maintain a straight line with full body.

Modification: Place your knees on the floor instead of your toes. Maintain a straight line from knees to shoulders.

Only do these exercises as you feel comfortable. Avoid exercises that cause your abdomen to peak or make a 'dome'.

BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Enhance overall health and well-being



Improve mood and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety



Increase energy



Improve sleep

Credits: Developed by Emily Gratopp, Photography by Vicki Jedlicka, Photography editing by Karen Wedding, Exercise poses by Emily Gratopp



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