

## Get movin', pregnant fairy!



Yes, we know you are big and uncomfortable, your back hurts and you are tired at the end of the day. But guess what, instead of adding even more strain and effort, mild exercise may actually turn all of these around for you!

A couple of good reasons for moms-to-be to get moving:

**Control weight gain:** Weight gain in pregnancy is inevitable – and important! However, excessive weight gain will leave you with some unnecessary flab after labour. Regular moderate exercise *now*, will save you a massive lot of effort in weight loss *later*.

**Improve fitness and heart health:** During pregnancy, your heart needs to work on an extra 1.25 litres of blood than before. Controlled aerobic exercise will assist to strengthen your heart muscle, improve oxygenation to your body and improve your fitness. This will also improve your general endurance, and you may feel less short of breath in the later stages of pregnancy.

**Increase energy levels:** In adjunct to fitness and heart health, exercise improves circulation to all parts of the body, and improves the transfer of oxygen to the cells, leaving you feeling more energised. Your endurance increases, your sleep improves and you will just feel much more energetic in general.

**Prevent back pain and stability:** Strengthening of your core muscles will take strain off your vertebrae, and improve your balance when your centre-of-gravity starts to become, well, a bit off-centre.

**Decreases your chances of contracting pregnancy-related medical conditions**, such as diabetes, constipation, high blood pressure, varicose veins and blood clots. Swollen feet and ankles will also be significantly alleviated.

**Decrease stress and anxiety and improve mental health:** There may be a million reasons for you to feel a bit under the weather. Maybe you feel slightly like a whale, or you are stressing about the financial implications of raising a child, or the prospect on parenthood may be a bit too daunting. Often, with bigger baggier off-balance bodies, our self-confidence may fade away. Whatever your reason, exercise will help you feel more in control of yourself and your body. The release of feel-good hormones will also help lift your spirit quite a bit.

**Aids with easier labour:** Whether we want to know it or not, labour is a marathon event. The fitter and stronger your body, the easier the labour process will be – plain and simple.

**Increases your recovery rate:** Whether your baby are delivered normally or via C-section, the body goes through a lot to get the little one out into this world. Fitter and stronger mummies are able to get up and move about much quicker, and can handle and nurture their babies comfortably much sooner than their couch-potato counterparts.

Ideas for moderate exercise:

Not all of us are gym fanatics or marathon runners. Here are some alternative ideas:

- Walking – not strolling along, but walking at a fast pace to get your heartrate up a bit.
- Swimming – wonderful exercise to strengthen your muscles and improve fitness while minimising strain on the joints
- Spinning – opt for a stationery gym bicycle rather than your usual mountainbike, to reduce the risk of falling
- Yoga or pilates
- Catch up on quality time with loved-ones – take your husband, dog or bestie along
- Join a local prenatal exercise class

Important things to remember:

- DO NOT overexert yourself. Start off slowly and gradually increase intensity and time of exercise.
- Take in a lot of fluid during and after exercise.
- Be sure to wear comfortable shoes and supportive socks.
- Whenever you experience any pain, lightheadedness, nausea, heart palpitations, tightness of the chest or any other unusual symptoms, stop with what you are doing. If it does not subside after a minute, seek medical attention.
- Refrain from exercise when you are ill.

So go on and get moving ladies! You owe it to your body and baby!