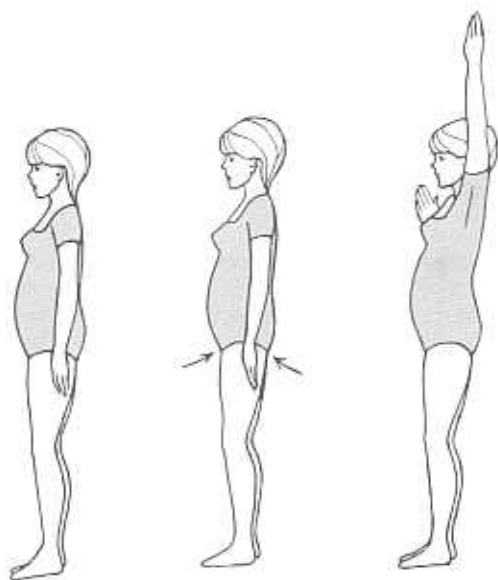


10 Exercises during pregnancy

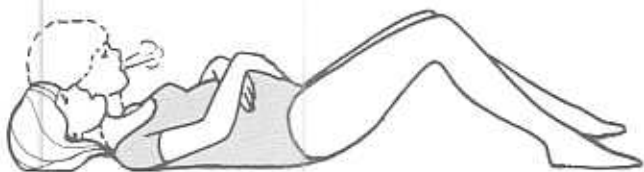
Pregnancy is a wonderful experience but also a time when you may be more sensitive to any small aches or pains. Keeping active within reason and doing recommended exercises is important not only for you, but for your baby as well. Exercising for two means coping better with changes going on in your body. You'll have more energy, and less discomfort and fatigue, all of which may later help during labour and post-natally. Make this experience even better by feeling the very best you can. Include these exercises daily if possible, doing each exercise 4 times and then working up to ten or more repetitions. Work to the level you feel comfortable with, never strain or do anything that hurts.



1. Posture/Warm Up – Standing with your feet apart, and knees slightly bent, tilt your pelvis forward by tightening the stomach and tucking your seat under to flatten your back. Relax and repeat. Next, keeping your pelvis tilted forward, reach both arms up and then reach with one, then the other, to get a good warm-up stretch. Repeat all arm movements.



2. Pelvic tilt – Lying on your back, with knees bent, tilt your pelvis up by tightening your stomach muscles and flattening your back onto the floor. Hold tightly and keep breathing, relax then repeat. This is an important exercise for relieving and preventing backache. It helps decrease the curve in the back and relieve strain in that area. Try to do this exercise frequently during the day. Do it in different positions such as sitting and standing to help your posture.



3. Strong stomach – Lie flat on your back with your knees bent. Cross your hands over your stomach to support it. Breathe in, then curl up, raising your head and shoulders off the floor as you breathe out. Slowly lower as you breathe in. Repeat. (Proper breathing is essential. In any exercise be sure to breathe out as you tighten muscles and breathe in when relaxing muscles.)



4. Pelvic floor – Sitting comfortably crossed-legged on the floor, concentrate on tightening the muscles between your legs. Hold each contraction for 2 seconds. Release then repeat.

- 1) Contract the front of the pelvic floor as you do to stop urinating by pulling in your abdominal muscles and squeezing the buttocks.
- 2) Contract the middle of the pelvic floor by pulling up inside the vagina then slowly let it down and release. (Don't hold your breath as you do this.)
- 3) Contract around the back passage (anus).
- 4) Lastly pull up all three together.

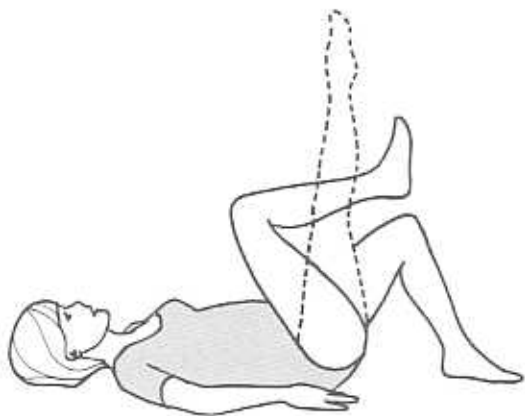
Do these exercises throughout the day, and in other positions, such as sitting, standing or even while waiting for the bus. They can help relieve the strain the added weight of the uterus puts on the muscles supporting your pelvic organs and can help relax the vaginal opening during birth. Work up to 100 times if you can!



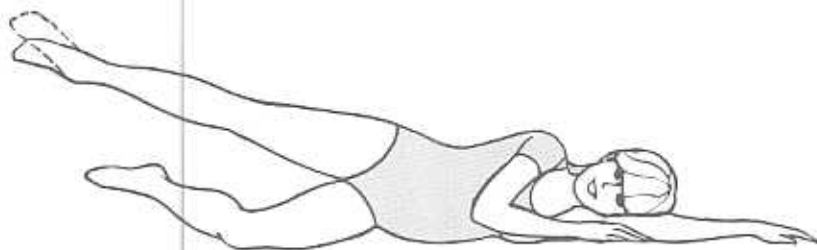
5. Thigh stretch – Sit in this butterfly position with the soles of the feet together. Hold your ankles and let your knees fall apart. Relax. Then lean your body forward and hold the stretch. Next, press down with your hands underneath your knees for resistance. Do not bounce or press too hard. Relax and repeat.



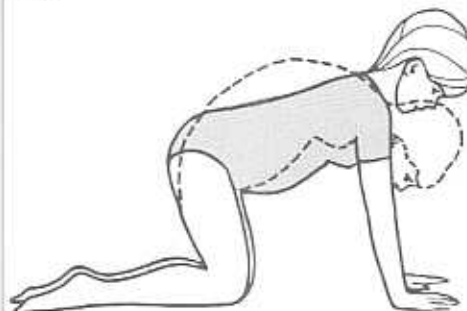
6. Ankle rotation – Lying on your back, bend both knees. Then rest one ankle on the opposite knee. Rotate the foot slowly in complete circles, first in one direction, then the other. Repeat with the other leg. (This exercise can help circulation and relieve the ankle swelling that occurs during pregnancy due to hormonal and circulatory changes.) Do this exercise when sitting as well.



7. Leg stretch – Lying on your back, arms at your sides, bring one knee right up toward your chest, then slowly straighten it with toes pointed, stretching it up to the ceiling. Lower to starting position. Repeat with the other leg.



8. Reclined leg lift – Lying on the floor on your side, bend your lower leg for support and raise the upper leg straight up to the side. Try to remain balanced with your hips slightly forward. Control the raise so that you do not extend the leg too high. Repeat with your foot flexed. Repeat with the other leg.



9. Angry cat – On hands and knees, hold your back flat then tighten stomach muscles and buttocks while arching your back up and dropping your head. Then relax to the starting position. Exhale while arching your back and inhale while relaxing; do not allow your back to sag. (This exercise is great for relief of backache.)



10. Shoulder/Arm rotation – While standing or sitting, place the fingers on each shoulder, arms bent, and circle your arms back, making small then larger circles. Repeat. Next hold the arms out straight at shoulder level and make circles from small to large. Repeat.



11. Relax – Cooling down is just as important as warming up. So you may want to repeat some of the first few exercises. The position shown here is recommended for relaxing or sleeping. On your side, bend your top knee up, support it with a pillow. Alternately tighten and release the muscles in your body working from feet to head. Concentrate on relaxing your whole body. Breathe slowly and evenly.