



## **Wisconsin Athletic Club**

# **PRE/POST NATAL FITNESS GUIDELINES**

### **ALL PREGNANT EXERCISERS SHOULD:**

- Get approval and clearance from OB BEFORE exercising.
- Exercise Frequency:
  - 3-5 times per week early in pregnancy, 3-4 times per week later in pregnancy
- Focus exercise on the following muscles when pregnant:
  - Upper back, glutes, abdominals, pelvic floor, quadriceps
- Always warm-up/cool-down when exercising
- Drink 6 – 8 ounces of water per 15 minutes of exercise
- Wear loose or lightweight clothing
- Avoid exercising in hot, humid conditions (not outside if it's higher than 80 degrees outside or 50% humidity)
- Avoid exercising to exhaustion; you should be energized a few hours after exercise
- Do NOT lie on back during 2nd and 3rd trimester (You may lie at a 45 degree incline)
- Perceived Exertion Workrate:
  - 1st Trimester – 6 or 7
  - 2nd Trimester – 5
  - 3rd Trimester – 3
- Exercise in water! Pool exercise decreases 50-75% of the weight bearing load on the body
- NOT exceed pre-pregnancy exercise levels
- NOT use the hot-tub

### **BENEFITS OF PRE-NATAL EXERCISE:**

- Fewer discomforts: strengthens joints and decreases constipation, back pain, nausea, varicose veins, insomnia, fatigue, and leg cramps.
- Helps control gestational diabetes
- Aids in the prevention of ailments: incontinence, diastasis recti.
- Decreases hypertension
- Improvement in body functions and mechanics: improves posture and circulation, decreases pelvis and rectal pressure
- Lowers resting heart rate and weight gain
- Stabilizes moods

### **PRE-NATAL NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXERCISE:**

- Eat a carbohydrate and protein within 1 hour BEFORE exercise to prevent hypoglycemia
- Additional 300 cal/day (less early on, more later on)
- Exercise adds 150-250 cal
- Small more frequent meals (helps with heartburn and indigestion).... AVOID DIETING
- Average weight gain is about 27.5 lbs

## LABOR & DELIVERY BENEFITS:

- Decreased need for:
  - Forceps or C-sections
  - Use of labor inducing drug, Pitocin
  - Less intervention for fetal HR abnormalities
- Does not promise an easier or less problematic delivery but increased physical strength, more endurance and mental strength

## CAUTIONS AND WARNING SIGNALS WHEN EXERCISING:

- Aerobic exercise will not be permitted with any of the following conditions:
  - Heart/lung disease
  - Preeclampsia
  - Incompetent cervix
  - Multiple premature labors
  - Bleeding
  - Placenta Previa (placenta pulls away from the wall)
  - Ruptured membranes (any leakage of fluid)
- Cautious aerobic exercise with any of the following:
  - Severe Anemia
  - Cardiac arrhythmia
  - Chronic Bronchitis/Smoker
  - Uncontrolled Type I diabetes
  - Morbid Obesity
  - Extreme Underweight
  - Sedentary lifestyle to begin with
  - Intrauterine growth restriction
  - Uncontrolled hypertension
  - Orthopedic limitations
  - Seizure disorder
  - Hyperthyroidism
- Warning signs to terminate exercise while pregnant (seek medical advice):
  - Vaginal bleeding
  - Elevated heart rate prior to exercise
  - Dizziness/headache
  - Chest pain/muscle weakness
  - Calf pain or swelling (blood clot indication)
  - Pre-term labor (contractions or tightness)
  - Decreased fetal movement (make sure you feel baby move 1 – 2 hours after exercise)
  - Amniotic fluid leakage is clear

- Call the OB if:
  - Bloody discharge
  - “Gush” of fluid
  - Sudden swelling
  - Headaches/vision problems
  - Faintness/dizziness
  - Calf pain/swelling/redness
  - Heart rate or blood pressure remains elevated
  - Excessive fatigue, palpitations, chest pain
  - Persistent contractions
  - Unexplained abdominal pain
  - Insufficient weight gain during last 2 trimesters (<2.2 lbs/month)

- High Risk Exercises (not recommended but is a personal choice):
  - Snow and water-skiing
  - Rock climbing/altitude
  - Road/mountain cycling
  - Diving/scuba diving
  - Bungee jumping
  - Horseback Riding
  - Ice skating/hockey

- Steps to decrease leg cramping:
  - Regular aerobic exercise
  - Adequate hydration
  - Proper Nutrition
  - Avoid heels and tight shoes
  - Avoid extreme pointing of toes

## POST NATAL GUIDELINES:

- Test for Diastasis Recti: Partial or complete separation of the rectus abdominus muscle from the linea alba
- Don't worry about exercise until 4 – 6 weeks after birth
  - Exercise could be an additional stressor (time and guilt)
  - Priorities are bonding with the baby, sleep, healing, breast feeding, etc.
  - Joints are still soft as hormones are still changing
- Could take 9 -12 months to get your “old body” back
- Weeks 2 -5, gentle walking with good spinal alignment
- No activity until bleeding stops
- Good breast support is key (two sports bras if needed)
- C-section: postpone exercise until doctor's clearance, then follow regular post-partum guidelines

## BREASTFEEDING AND EXERCISE:

- Moderate to high intensity exercise does not impair the quality or quantity of breast milk
- Breast milk has the potential to be more sour
- Feed baby prior to exercise or wait 60 minutes after
- Additional intake of 300-500 cal/day if breastfeeding
- Requires about 2 additional quarts of water/day