Physical Activity Throughout Pregnancy

Physical activity throughout pregnancy promotes maternal, fetal, and neonatal health. All women experiencing a healthy pregnancy should engage in physical activity.

Consider other components of a healthy lifestyle including nutrition, sleep, and avoiding smoking, alcohol and illicit drugs

What are the benefits?

- Enhances maternal physical and mental health
- Contributes to fewer newborn complications
- Decreases the severity of low back and pelvic pain

Physical activity decreases the risk of

- Pre-eclampsia
- High blood pressure
- Gestational diabetes
- Need for C-section
- Excessive weight gain
- Urinary incontinence
- Diastasis recti[a]

Safety precautions

- Avoid excessive heat and high humidity (e.g. hot yoga)
- Avoid physical contact sport or dangers of falling (e.g. horseback riding)
- Avoid scuba diving

Potential physical activity options to be discussed with your healthcare provider

- At least 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity activity each week (e.g. brisk walking) accumulated over a minimum of 3 days per week
- Aerobic and resistance exercise including warm-up and cool down periods
- Yoga or gentle stretching
- Pelvic floor muscle training (e.g. Kegel exercises)
- Modify exercise position (avoid supine) if experiencing light-headedness, nausea, or feeling unwell

Stop exercising and contact your healthcare provider if you experience any of the following

- Shortness of breath that does not go away with rest
- Light-headedness, nausea or feeling unwell while exercising
- Dizziness or faintness that does not go away with rest
- Chest pain
- Regular and painful uterine contractions
- Vaginal bleeding
- Fluid loss from the vagina

[a]Diastasis recti is a visible and painless separation of the midline abdominal muscles
Information based on: Mottola MF, Davenport MH, Ruchat S-M., et al. 2019 Canadian guideline for physical activity throughout pregnancy. Br J Sports Med. 2018; 52:1339-1346.