



Everything you need to know about

# Antenatal Exercises



NEW MOWASAT HOSPITAL  
CARING FOR GENERATIONS



# ANTENATAL EXERCISES:

Being pregnant doesn't mean stopping exercises. On the contrary, exercises do wonders for you during pregnancy. It helps to prepare you for childbirth by strengthening your muscles and building endurance. Moreover, it helps getting your body back in shape, once the baby is born. Of course, not every form of sport or exercise is safe to do, but many forms are. Most women will benefit, as long as they are not advised against exercise (e.g. due to medical condition) by the doctor).

## **Benefits of antenatal exercises:**

Regular exercises can be beneficial as it helps you to relax and makes you feel better. The main benefits include:

1. Improved circulation for mother and baby.
2. Reduction in aches and pains of pregnancy e.g. backache, cramps etc.
3. Improved stamina, giving you more energy to cope with growing demands of pregnancy.
4. Improved posture and body awareness.
5. More controlled weight gain.
6. Improved sleeping patterns.
7. Reduction in minor ailments of pregnancy such as: stiffness, tension, constipation, sleeplessness.
8. Increased circulation minimizing varicose veins and swelling.
9. Enhanced psychological wellbeing.
10. A beneficial effect on the course and outcome of labor.

## **Some points to keep in mind before starting with exercises:**

1. If you have always been active, you can probably continue your exercise regime while you're pregnant, providing your pregnancy isn't considered high risk.

2. Check with your doctor to make sure the activities you participate in are right for you. Also, if you've never been an athlete, your doctor can give you some helpful tips for getting started.
3. **Wear loose fitting, breathable clothing and supportive shoes:** avoid overheating your body while you are exercising. Just layer your clothes so that they are easy to remove or wear outfits specially designed for exercise. You'll also need athletic shoes that fit your feet properly. If your shoe size has changed because of mild swelling, buy a new comfortable pair.
4. **Warm up before exercising:** always warm up your muscles and joints to prepare your body for exercise. If you skip the warm up and jump into strenuous activity before your body is ready, you could strain your ligaments and can hurt yourself.
5. **Keep moving:** standing motionless for long stretches can decrease blood flow to the uterus and blood pools in your legs, making you feel dizzy. So keep moving- change positions or walk in place.
6. **Avoid overdoing it:** don't "go for the burn" and don't exercise to the exhaustion. A good rule of thumb is to slow down if you can't comfortably carry on the conversation.
7. **If you feel uncomfortable or have pain, stop immediately:** listen to your body. When something hurts, something's wrong, so stop. You should feel like you are working your body, not punishing it.
8. **Drink lots of water before, during, and after exercising:** if you don't drink plenty of fluids, you can get dehydrated. Try drinking two glasses of water two hours before you begin exercising.

Drink another glass or two of water every 15-20 minutes during your workout.

9. **Get up from the floor slowly and carefully:** your centre of gravity shifts during pregnancy. That's why you should take great care when you shift positions. Getting up quickly can make you dizzy, and cause you to lose your footing and fall.
10. **Avoid outdoor activities when it's hot and humid:** take it easy when it's too hot. On particularly hot and humid days, give your workout a miss or exercise indoors in a well-ventilated room.
11. **Cool down:** walk in place for few minutes or stretch. It gives your heart a chance to return gradually to its normal rate.

### Recommended exercises during pregnancy:

The following exercises are fairly safe for expectant mothers, although some of them may not work for you during the last few months of your pregnancy. To be safe, consult your doctor before embarking on any of these activities.



1. **Walking:** it is one of the best exercises for the pregnant women. Walking keeps you fit without jarring your knees and ankles. It is safe throughout the nine months and can be built into your day to day schedule.



2. **Jogging / running:** going for the jog is the quickest and most efficient way to work your heart and your body. You can tailor it to your schedule—running 15 minutes one day when that's all you can fit in then 30 minutes the next when you have time.
3. **Swimming:** fitness experts hail swimming as the best and the safest exercise for the pregnant women. It is ideal because it exercises both large muscle groups (arms and legs), provides good cardiovascular benefits, and allows pregnant women to feel weightless despite the extra weight of pregnancy.



4. **Yoga and stretches:** they can help maintaining muscle tone and keep you flexible with little if any impact on your joints. Be careful not to overdo the stretching. Don't hold the stretches for too long or try to develop your flexibility too much.



5. **Pilates:** Pilates are the form of exercises which combines flexibility and strength training with body awareness, breathing and relaxation. The exercises are based on certain movement pattern performed with your tummy and pelvic floor muscles-known in Pilates as “stable core” or base.



## Try the following exercises to see how your core stability is:

- Sit down on your hands and knees then level your back so that it is roughly flat.
  - Breathe in and then as you breathe out, perform a pelvic floor exercise and at the same time pull your belly button in and up. Try to hold this contraction for 10 seconds without holding your breath and without moving your back. Relax the muscle in the end of the exercise.
  - If you can easily perform this exercise a lot, then your pelvic floor and the lower abdominal muscles are working well. This exercise is safe at all stages of pregnancy.
6. **Pelvic floor exercise:** the pelvic floor muscles forms the base of the pelvis. When strong and working properly they play an important role in helping prevent stress incontinence, (so when we laugh, cough, sneeze or lift something up no urine or stool accidentally escapes), and in preventing prolapse, (where the uterus slips down into the vagina).



Exercising your pelvic floor muscles during the pregnancy is beneficial when you're giving birth, as toned muscles will be easier to relax and control.

## Exercises to avoid:

Not everything is ideal for pregnancy and you are advised to avoid several forms of exercises, including the following:

- Diving
- Water skiing
- Gymnastics
- Netball
- Hockey
- Horse riding
- Cycling
- Rock climbing
- Scuba diving etc.



## Who to Ask for more information

If you need more information,  
you may contact your Nurse/Midwife on  
Telephone Number: 9841892 or  
E-mail: [cbe@newmowasat.com](mailto:cbe@newmowasat.com)



NEW MOWASAT HOSPITAL  
CARING FOR GENERATIONS

