

EXERCISES DURING PREGNANCY

The pelvic floor muscles are the most important muscles for childbirth. They help hold all of the organs in the pelvis in the correct position. There are several exercises that help to strengthen this area; these can be demonstrated at your prenatal visit. Pilates, or core exercises, work the very best, some of which can be done while you are pregnant and some, which are better suited for postpartum. Keeping the pelvic floor strong and healthy allows ease of tissue stretching for your baby to emerge, minimizes tearing, helps avoid incontinence and helps with a quick postpartum recovery.

Kegels - As you exhale, tighten your pelvic floor, hold for 10 seconds and release. Repeat 10 times. The Elevator Kegel – imagine your pelvic floor is an elevator and draw your muscles up 1 floor at a time until you reach 4 and then release one floor at a time. Repeat 10 times.

Pelvic Tilts – This exercise strengthens your abdominal muscles to help you push out your baby, improves your posture and it helps to relieve back pressure or strain caused by the growing baby and uterus. Lie on your back with your knees bent, roll your pelvis up and press your waist to the floor. This is a very minimal movement, but it does wonders. Repeat 10 times.

Squats – Use any opportunity to squat while you are pregnant. This will strengthen your legs and pelvic floor to assist you in positions of birth. Squat to pick up your children, squat to put clothes away, squat to pick up shoes, squat to weed your garden, squat to look in the oven, squat while you play with your children, squat while you talk on the phone.

Walk – Walking improves your circulation, increases your stamina, strengthens your leg muscles, improves your digestion, relaxes your body and makes you feel good. You should try to walk every day. Park a little further away at the mall or grocery store, walk around the block, walk with a friend, take the stairs at work instead of the elevator. 5 minutes warm-up, 20 minutes of brisk walking and a 5-minute cool down.

Swimming – Swimming is great for many reasons. It lightens your load – your body can float freely in water, it lowers your blood pressure, it relaxes you and the baby, it helps the baby stay in a good position for birth. Many times swimming is recommended to turn a posterior or a breech baby. Swim as often as you can.

Like walking, swim gently for 5 minutes, 20 minutes of continuous laps and then a 5-minute cool down.

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