

Being physically active and exercising helps to control the amount of sugar in the blood as muscle cells take up the sugar. Muscle cells also become more sensitive to insulin which means they also take up sugars more easily after physical activity.

Every pregnant person is different so physical activity and the type of physical activity you do should be discussed and agreed upon with your healthcare team.

### Benefits of physical activity during pregnancy

- Helps you to control blood sugar levels
- Increases your likelihood of a healthy pregnancy
- Reduces your risk of developing other health conditions
- Helps you to manage your weight and blood sugar levels
- Supports your mood, mental health and wellbeing
- Keeps your body healthy
- Keeps your baby healthy

### Physical activity guideline

If you were not active before you became pregnant you should start gradually and build up slowly. If you were active before you became pregnant you should try and maintain the same levels of activity.

You should aim to complete 150 minutes of moderate physical activity and two days of muscle-strengthening physical activities per week. The infographic below developed by the UK Chief Medical Officer highlights the national physical activity guideline for pregnant people:

# Physical activity for pregnant women

- Helps to control weight gain
- Helps reduce high blood pressure problems
- Helps to prevent diabetes of pregnancy
- Improves fitness
- Improves sleep
- Improves mood



- No evidence of harm**
- Listen to your body and adapt**
- Don't bump the bump**

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

## Moderate physical activity

You should still be able to hold a conversation during physical activity. If you become breathless, you're probably pushing yourself too hard. Ensure you discuss your plans for physical activity with your antenatal team, perhaps your GP or midwife so they can support you in finding the best physical activity and exercise for you. Particularly with any new physical activity or exercise it's important to ensure it is right for you and to identify how often and for how long you should exercise for.

## Avoid sitting down as much as possible

Limiting the time you spend sitting down (being sedentary) can help. This can be difficult if you work in an office or feel tired. But you could try:

- Walking to work
- Getting off the bus a stop earlier
- Walking around the office
- Setting a reminder on your phone to stand up and move around
- Taking the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- Going for a walk on your lunch break
- Doing housework
- Make habits active (e.g., calf extensions while you brush your teeth)

## Physical activities examples

- Walking
- Swimming
- Jogging or running
- Yoga and Pilates (avoid hot yoga such as Bikram)
- Aerobics
- Pelvic floor and core exercises
- Low-impact aerobics
- Stationary bike
- Strength training
- Swimming or aqua aerobics

## Physical activities to avoid

- Exercises that involve lying down on your back after 16 weeks
- Contact sports, especially martial arts
- Any sports that involve a high risk of falling
- Scuba diving
- Swimming or aqua aerobics in water over 32 degrees Celsius

## Keeping safe while taking part in physical activity

- Take an emergency snack with you (see 'managing blood sugar' levels information guide for a list of emergency snacks)
- Check your blood sugar levels before, during and after physical activity to ensure they are not too low (if below 4mmol/l follow your hypo treatment)
- Hydrate before, during and after physical activity
- Avoid physical activity during high humidity or heat
- Wear sun protection if outside (e.g., cap, sun lotion, sunglasses)
- Avoid carrying unnecessary items or bags (e.g., choose a belt bag or small rucksack instead of a handbag)
- Listen to your body and stop if you start to feel unwell (check your blood sugar levels and eat an emergency snack if your levels have gone too low)
- Eat something before and after you do physical activity (e.g., fruit, yoghurt, 2-3 whole wheat crackers or oatcakes)

## Signposting

### Reed Wellbeing

Exercise Referral Practitioners have created these exercise videos. They focus on 3 aspects of physical fitness: strength, cardio and core stability. They are split into 3 levels of intensity, so you can choose depending on your preference and ability.

#### Level 1 intensity exercise

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT\\_rOXF0WWyuBLd5WoTFcT2sFWtTGrF](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT_rOXF0WWyuBLd5WoTFcT2sFWtTGrF)

#### Level 2 intensity exercise

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT\\_rOXF0WX2DndEVk-pzNGCu7Rk9sjR](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT_rOXF0WX2DndEVk-pzNGCu7Rk9sjR)

#### Level 3 intensity exercise

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT\\_rOXF0WVa1rWXwOPkKou-PGa5M7rL](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJaT_rOXF0WVa1rWXwOPkKou-PGa5M7rL)

### Body Project

#### Low impact exercise

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCFjc9H89-RpWuIStDqhO7AQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFjc9H89-RpWuIStDqhO7AQ)

## NHS

#### NHS fitness studio

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/)

#### Pelvic floor exercise

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMinq\\_ai1hU&ab\\_channel=NHS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMinq_ai1hU&ab_channel=NHS)

#### Active 10 app

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/>

#### Exercise in pregnancy (NHS)

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/exercise/>

### This Mum Moves

#### Exercise resources

[www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/thismummoves-mums](http://www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/thismummoves-mums)

## Diabetes UK

**Blood sugar levels and exercise**

<http://tinyurl.com/75f8bps4>

## Tommys

**Physical activity information**

<http://tinyurl.com/55sbnx5k>

## UK Chief Medical Officer

**Physical activity guideline**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/620a28288fa8f54916f45dfc/physical-activity-for-pregnant-women.pdf>