PERFECTLY Pregnant!
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When you’re carrying around a growing human being inside of you, the last thing you want to be doing is exercising, right? However, you’ll be surprised to know that pregnant women who exercise tend to have less back pain, improved muscle tone, more energy, and a better body image overall.

QUICK NOTE:
Before you dive right into a new exercise regime or change your eating plan, always remember to consult your medical practitioner – just to be safe!

WHY IS EXERCISE GOOD FOR THE MAMA-TO-BE?

- Keeps you moving and gets your heart rate up;
- Helps maintain weight and prevent weight gain;
- Prepares your body for the strain of labour;
- Reduces the risk of elevated blood pressure;
- Reduces the risk of gestational diabetes;
- Boosts energy levels and positive body image;
- Improves sleeping patterns during pregnancy; and
- Helps the body to recover quicker after giving birth.
SAFETY FIRST

1. Mind the bump
As your belly grows, the shift in the centre of your body’s gravity can throw off your coordination. Especially after week 28, be sure to steer clear of activities like jumping, bouncing or suddenly changing direction, or activities where you might fall or sustain injuries.

2. Breathe easy
Shortness of breath is fairly common during pregnancy. The question is, at what stage does the huffing and puffing become too much? A good guide is the Talk Test – if you can’t sustain a normal conversation while you exercise, it’s time to call it a day.

3. Get the run down
Experts recommend walking as the best and safest form of exercise during pregnancy. However, if you were a runner or regular jogger prior to your pregnancy, doctors say it’s safe to continue for as long as it feels comfortable. The key is to listen to your body!

4. Build up your strength
Most women forget to focus on improving their upper-body strength during pregnancy. The physical demands of caring and nurturing a baby can take its toll, so it’s essential that you strengthen your upper and lower back with some light resistance exercises.

5. Stop right there
The moment you start experiencing any of the following, stop what you’re doing and relax:

- Contractions or leakage of amniotic fluid
- Excessive shortness of breath
- Dizziness or faintness
- Vaginal bleeding
- Difficulty walking
- Abdominal pain – particularly in the back or pubic area
- Chest, pelvic, leg joint or stomach pain
- Headaches
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain or swelling
Trimester 1:

What’s happening to your body?
You might not look much different yet, but you’ll certainly feel very different! During the first three months of pregnancy, you’ll most likely feel pretty exhausted, develop an acute sense of smell, experience dizziness and light-headedness, and suffer from nausea. So a short walk around the block may be all you can manage.

Should you exercise?
Yes! Doing some activity may help ease some of these early symptoms, so do your best to stick to your exercise plan. Exercise can actually give you more energy! Try some outdoor exercises to give your body a real boost. It’s a really important time for the formation of the baby’s major organs, so it’s best not to exercise to the point of exhaustion. Essentially, you need to avoid raising your core temperature.

Activity guideline
You can still do more or less the same exercises as before you became pregnant, just use your common sense, and stay away from high intensity or dangerous exercises. If you are completely new to exercise, start by walking and swimming, and add some gentle resistance training in Trimester 2. You should avoid forward-bending exercises, including crunches, and steer clear of core activities that involve rolling up and down.
## SUGGESTED EXERCISE PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking on the spot or go for a walk</td>
<td>Standing in one spot, lift your knees up to hip height while simultaneously lifting the opposite arm in a walking fashion.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat and Camel</td>
<td>On all fours, ensure that your back is straight, and then proceed to arch your back and return to starting position. Repeat as indicated.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumo squats</td>
<td>Place feet wider than your shoulders and facing forward, with hands on your hips. From this position, bend the knees to a 90° angle, keeping your back straight.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static lunges</td>
<td>Standing with one leg in front of the other, keeping the back straight at all times, push the body down by bending both knees. Ensure that the knee of the front leg does not go over the toes and back knee does not touch the ground.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (on each side)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trimester 2:

What’s happening to your body?
Soon you’ll start looking pregnant, that’s to say if you’re not showing already. You might be feeling any number of things during Trimester 2 – for instance, you may be full of energy or still suffering from the ravages of morning sickness. It differs from person to person.

Should you exercise?
Yes! Just remember to go at your own pace and listen to your body. Now that your baby bump is showing, your centre of gravity will have shifted to the front, which means you’ll have an uneven body weight. This can affect your balance, and leads to altered posture, lengthened abdominal muscles and, for some women, lower back pain. Exercise will continue to make you feel good, strong and energised, so keep it up!

Activity guideline
Avoid sit-ups, excessive twisting, fancy footwork, lying on your back or front for too long and anything that causes you to feel unbalanced. Avoid lifting heavier weights, but do more reps of lighter weights when doing strength training. Ideally you can mix low-impact fitness and strength training such as standing Pilates, swimming and power walking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
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<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking on the spot</td>
<td>Standing in one spot, lift your knees until hip height while simultaneously lifting the opposite arm in a walking fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Jumping Jacks</td>
<td>Moving side to side with your legs, while your arms reach up till the hands touch at the top</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelvic Lifting On Heels</td>
<td>Lying on your back, with a pillow supporting your lower back, raise your back/hips of the ground with both of your heels on the ground and the toes lifted up. Keep back straight, and hold the position.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hold for 10 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Push Up’s</td>
<td>Using either a wall, give yourself some space from the wall. Place hands shoulder width apart, and move the chest towards wall until the elbows bend at a 90° angle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trimester 3:

What’s happening to your body?
Chances are you’ll be walking around with a pretty impressive bump by now! You will probably be out of breath and tired at times, and may well have some pregnancy related aches and pains as your body changes in order to accommodate your growing baby.

Should you exercise?
Definitely. Your exercise plan has never been more important than right now, and you need to keep your muscles, joints and circulation as healthy as possible for the good health of both you and your baby. Practicing relaxation techniques in preparation for labour can be as beneficial as going to the gym. All your hard work will make it easier to deal with the birth.

Activity guideline
Be mindful of your growing bump and changing body. Don’t transition too quickly, and move in a slow and controlled manner. Consider low-impact alternatives for your cardio sessions but don’t stop exercising. Focus on stretching the muscles in the top of your body, like your chest muscles and mid-to-lower-back postural muscles. Strong legs and glutes are essential if you want a natural birth.
## SUGGESTED EXERCISE PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking on the spot</td>
<td>Standing in one spot, lift your knees until hip height while simultaneously lifting the opposite arm in a walking fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelvic roll</td>
<td>Start by performing stretches by shifting your pelvic area slightly forward and back. Repeat at least 20 times and make sure you are at your comfort level.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 times per side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat and Camel</td>
<td>On all fours, ensure that your back is straight, and then proceed to arch your back and return to starting position. Repeat as indicated.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward facing dog</td>
<td>Step closes to the wall and place your feet away from the wall. Place your hands onto the wall and step back. Draw your head and chest in through your arms Tilt the tail bone upwards and breathe relaxed. And return back up by taking small steps forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Healthy Habits

Eating healthy during pregnancy can be highly beneficial.

- **Reduced risk of pregnancy complications:** Eating well can help maintain healthy blood pressure, blood sugar and weight.

- **Reduced risk of birth defects:** It is critical to consume key nutrients such as folic acid and iron, as these have been linked to birth defects such as spina bifida (Spina bifida is known as split spine is a birth defect where is incomplete closing of the backbone membranes around the spinal cord).

- **Ensures a healthy weight for your baby:** A low birth weight can set babies up for a lifetime of health complications or disabilities.

- **Faster weight loss after birth:** Eating well throughout your pregnancy keeps your metabolism in top condition, for easier weight loss after pregnancy.

**HEALTHY EATING TIPS**

- Only 300 additional calories are needed to ensure proper growth of your baby.

- Choose foods and beverages that are nutrient dense, packed with vitamins and minerals.

- Consume foods from all five food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy and meat).

- Drink water instead of soft drinks, cordial, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy drinks, sports drinks or alcoholic drinks.

**KEY NUTRIENTS DURING PREGNANCY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUTRIENT</th>
<th>WHY</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Proteins**   | Helps to maintain muscle and body tissue (for you and your baby) | 60 g/day         | • lean meats  
|                |                             |                  | • poultry  
|                |                             |                  | • fish  
|                |                             |                  | • dairy products  
|                |                             |                  | • legumes (beans)  
| **Carbohydrates** | Source of energy  | Additional 300kcal/day (over what your daily requirements are) | • whole grain cereals and breads  
<p>|                |                             |                  | • fruits and vegetables  |</p>
<table>
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<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fats     | Source of energy and supplies body with essential fatty acids (not produced by body, so they must be obtained by the body) | 20-35% of total intake (daily) should come from unsaturated fats | Unsaturated fats include:  
- fish  
- vegetable oils, (canola, olive, peanut, safflower and sunflower oils, nuts and flaxseeds) |
| Folic acid | Reduce the risk of spina bifida and other neural tube defects, or birth defects of the brain and spinal cord in infants | 400mcg of folic acid daily/supplement |  
- grain products  
- green leafy vegetables  
- legumes  
- citrus fruits and juices |
| Calcium  | Growth and maintenance of bones and teeth | 1000mg/day – if insufficient from food, then take 600 mg/day of calcium supplement (Note that Vitamin D is important for absorption of calcium) |  
- milk  
- yoghurt  
- cheese  
- dark green leafy vegetables (like spinach)  
- dried beans  
- nuts and seeds  
- tofu  
- sardines  
Calcium fortified foods such as:  
- orange juice  
- soy milk  
- breakfast cereals |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>NUTRIENT</th>
<th>WHY</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>• Carries oxygen through the blood and delivers it throughout the body.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aids in immunity boosting, brain development, body temperature regulation, metabolism and physical performance</td>
<td>27 mg</td>
<td>whole grain breads and cereal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green leafy vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>beans and nuts</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eggs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dried fruits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fish</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poultry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calcium fortified foods such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>soy milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>breakfast cereals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vitamin and minerals

Supplements are especially recommended for people at high risk of nutrition deficiency

Vitamin A:
- mango
- papaya
- yellow sweet melon
- apricots
- carrots
- sweet potatoes
- spinach
- fortified margarine
- fortified milk
- liver
- kidneys

Vitamin C:
- citrus fruit
- kiwi
- guavas
- strawberries
- sweet melon
- mango
- brussel sprouts
- cabbage
- peppers
- tomatoes

Vitamin K:
- broccoli
- liver
- eggs
- dairy products
- cabbage
- dark leafy vegetables
- lettuce
Your 7-Day Meal Plan

Rich in:
✔ Folate (good for baby’s nervous system)
✔ Iron (carries oxygen through the blood and delivers it throughout the body)
✔ Vitamin B6 and calcium (for strong bones and teeth)

Colour-code your plate:
✔ Green (folic acid rich foods)
✔ Purple (Vitamin B6 rich foods)
✔ Red (iron rich foods)
✔ Yellow (calcium rich foods)

DAY 1

Breakfast
- 2 slices whole grain brown bread
- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter
- 1 cup orange juice/1 cup of tea with milk

Snack
- 1 small packet of raisin/nuts

Lunch
- Smoked chicken and avocado salad
- 1 glass of apple juice

Snack
- Fruited yogurt
- Orange

Supper
- Steak (trimmed) with 1 medium roasted potato with skin, cooked in 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 cup cooked carrots
- ½ cup of cooked green salad with 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 cup of water

Snack
- banana
DAY 2

Breakfast  
- 1 cup oatmeal, cooked  
- 1/2 cup milk  
- 1 tsp. brown sugar  
- 1 boiled egg  
- 1 cup fruit juice  

Snack  
- 1 ½ cups fresh fruit salad/whole fruit  

Lunch  
- Sandwich: 2/3 cup of lean boiled mince, 1 slice low fat cheese, mixed lettuce greens, mustard, on 2 slices whole grain bread.  
- 1 ½ cups sliced raw vegetables with 1 Tbsp. low fat salad dressing  

Snack  
- black eyed pea soup  

Supper  
- 3 skinless chicken breast  
- 1 corn  
- 1 cup oriental style broccoli with 1 tsp. olive oil  
- 1 whole grain roll with 1 tsp. butter/margarine  
- 1 cup of fruit juice  

Snack  
- Slice of banana bread  
- 1 cup of tea with low fat milk  

DAY 3

Breakfast  
- Scrambled eggs  
- Wholegrain brown bread toast  
- 1 cup of rooibos tea, milk and 1 tsp brown sugar/1 cup of orange juice  

Snack  
- Small bunch of grapes  
- Yoghurt smoothie  

Lunch  
- Beef and black pea casserole  

Snack  
- 4 crackers with sardine paste  

Supper  
- 1½ cups pasta with tuna and tomato and olive sauce  
- 1 cup of spinach  

Snack  
- Small roll with peanut butter
### DAY 4

**Breakfast**  
- Oats with sliced banana

**Snack**  
- 1 English all bran muffin spread with 1 Tbsp. peanut butter

**Lunch**  
- Grilled pork with baked potato, asparagus and green beans

**Snack**  
- Sesame seeds (rich in iron)

**Supper**  
- 2 grilled or baked fish fillets with 1 cup of brown rice  
- 1 cup broccoli cooked with 1 tsp. olive oil  
- 1 cup coleslaw, made with low fat Mayonnaise

**Snack**  
- 2 cups low fat popcorn or 1 small pear

### DAY 5

**Breakfast**  
- wheat brisk cereal mashed with yoghurt and mixed berries

**Snack**  
- handful each of dried apricots and almonds

**Lunch**  
- Sandwich: 1 large whole grain roll, 1 turkey breast or lean ham, shredded lettuce, pickled with 1 Tbsp. olive oil and vinegar  
- 1 cup dark green leafy vegetables with 1 Tbsp. of low fat salad dressing  
- 1 cup of orange juice

**Snack**  
- 1 medium banana

**Supper**  
- 3 small slices of cheese pizza with veggies

**Snack**  
- 1 cup of tea with milk and 1 Tbsp. brown sugar  
- 2 plain biscuits with sardine paste
### DAY 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Breakfast** | • Breakfast smoothie: 1 cup of milk, ½ cup of vanilla yogurt, 1 cup of any fruit  
(blend together; add ice if desired) |
| **Snack**     | • 1 cup bran cereal  
• 1 cup of milk |
| **Lunch**     | • Veggie burger with 1 slice cheese, lettuce and tomato on a whole wheat bun  
• 1 cup spicy beans  
• 2 kiwi fruit |
| **Snack**     | • ¼ cup almonds |
| **Supper**    | • Stir fried vegetables with: 1½ cups cabbage, broccoli and spinach, sautéed in  
olive oil  
• Chicken liver/ox liver  
• 2/3 cups brown rice  
• 1 cup sliced mixed Fruit |
| **Snack**     | • 3 crisp bread crackers  
• 2 Tbsp. of low fat spread  
• 1 cup of tea with milk and 1 Tbsp. brown sugar |

### DAY 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>• English muffin with sausage patty and mozzarella slice -1 cup of orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
<td>• 1 medium peach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Lunch**     | • 1 cup of brown rice/ pap  
• stewed chicken with skin removed |
| **Snack**     | • 1 fruited yoghurt |
| **Supper**    | • 1 cup lean beef stew  
• Dark leafy green vegetable raw salad with feta cheese and 1 Tbsp. salad dressing,  
• 1 medium apple |
| **Snack**     | • 1 slice of carrot cake |
Get moving after the birth

You must be itching to get back into your exercise routine! After 9 months of pregnancy it may feel good to reconnect with your body. Take it easy in the beginning. Doctors recommend that you rest for at least 6 weeks after vaginal birth, and a bit longer after a caesarean. Your doctor will need to check for abdominal separations which may determine when you can return to your workout. Remember to consult your medical practitioner before you get back into your exercise routine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skipping on the spot</td>
<td>With an imaginary skipping rope, pretend like you are using a skipping rope and skip for the allocated time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamstring stretch (T-Band)</td>
<td>Lying on your back, with a pillow supporting your lower back. Place a theraband on the soles of your feet and hold it in your hand. Use it to assist you to raise your leg up, keeping it straight, while the other leg remains bent and in contact with the ground. Repeat this on the other leg.</td>
<td>2 (on each side)</td>
<td>Hold for 10-15 30 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oblique stretch  Place hands at the side of the body. Bend to the left with the right arm lifted and hold the position for the designated time, and repeat on the other side.

Plank  From lying on your stomach, lift the body with only the toes, elbows, and forearms touching the floor. Keep your back straight. Hold the position for the allotted time, while tightening/pulling your abdominal muscles.

Appendix A

Communication tool kit
Information that will be disseminated in each trimester will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>TRIMESTER 1</th>
<th>TRIMESTER 2</th>
<th>TRIMESTER 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication 1</td>
<td>Food cravings and pregnancy</td>
<td>Diagnosis and management of hypertensive disorder</td>
<td>When should my baby go into the Cephalic position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication 2</td>
<td>Why do I feel so tired?</td>
<td>Twins and gestational diabetes</td>
<td>Exercises to prepare for labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication 3</td>
<td>How much weight can I gain?</td>
<td>Doctors’ visits in the second trimester</td>
<td>Hypertensive disorder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“You never understand life until it grows inside of you.”

- Sandra Chami Kassis