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Media Release for immediate use – Pregnancy and Exercise - What You Need to Know

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Pregnancy and Exercise - What You Need to Know

Pregnancy and the early months of having a new baby are times of big changes for your body and there is no shortage of advice and information on what's best for you and your baby. When it comes to exercise there are plenty of ideas about what women should and shouldn't do, but not all of it based in fact.

We are designed to move, and when we are pregnant it's no different, however many women pregnant for the first time are concerned about how exercise can affect their baby. The most important thing to remember is that a positive pregnancy test does not mean 9 months with your feet up not able to do anything (although a tempting thought at times).

The general rule is that if you are exercising prior to getting pregnant, then you can continue on exercising as you were, adapting as required with support and advice from a qualified and experienced exercise professional.

If you are a non-exerciser, then pregnancy is not the right time to start a vigorous new 'get fit programme', but regular and gentle sessions will be of benefit to you.

Avoiding over exercising is not just about your baby. It is also about you being in the best condition possible by the time you have to deal with a new baby, and that's more about energy levels and feeling good about yourself, than how long it takes to get back to your pre-pregnancy shape.

Some important things to consider and take into account:

BODY TEMPERATURE

Your baby's cooling system is not as developed as yours, so if you overheat, so will your baby. Make sure you exercise in well-ventilated areas, wear suitable clothing, and limit exercising in hotter weather. Many exercise facilities have air conditioning, or you can exercise at a cooler part of the day.

STRETCHING AND FLEXIBILITY

During pregnancy your body produces relaxin, which makes you more flexible. This is not all bad news, but it does mean if you 'bounce' around too much or over stretch, you are more likely to cause yourself an injury like a muscle strain or a twisted ankle. Some exercises that

involve a big range of movement may not be suitable, and your exercise professional will be able to guide you on this.

BLOOD PRESSURE AND BLOOD FLOW

Your blood volume increases during pregnancy and elevated blood pressure is common. Try to avoid working with heavy weights above your head in the final trimester as this is more likely to affect your blood pressure leading to dizziness.

As your baby gets larger, stay away from exercises that involve lying on your back as the weight pushing down restricts blood flow to the wee person. A good exercise professional will thoroughly 'pre screen' you, which means they will find out all about your exercise history, injuries and important information before they start you on an exercise programme.

FOOD AND EXERCISE

It's all about the best nutrition to keep you well throughout your pregnancy and beyond and give your baby the best start. Make sure if you are exercising that you are eating often, in small quantities, especially before and after your session to avoid low blood sugar, which can cause dizziness and fatigue. Make sure you keep well hydrated, sipping small amounts of water throughout any exercise session.

If you are motivated and committed to your exercise programme, and aren't currently working with an exercise professional, then now is the time to get the right advice. A REPs Registered Exercise Professional will be able to tell you what you shouldn't do, but more importantly they will be able to assist you with plenty of exercise options that you CAN do.

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) also has some handy brochures with information on prenatal and postnatal exercise, and you can get your copy from your REPs Registered Exercise Professional or facility.

Remember, before embarking on any new exercise, check in with your maternity carer.

Contact Details:

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Who is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administering the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "Warrant of Fitness Check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 70,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org.

