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Media Release – Keeping Active While Pregnant
From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Keeping Active While Pregnant

Bodies are designed to move, and in pregnancy it's no different.

Pregnancy and the early months of having a new baby are times of big changes for a woman's body and life. When it comes to exercise, there are plenty of ideas about what women should and shouldn't do - not all of it based on fact.

Many women cut down on exercise due to being unsure of whether it's safe, and what adaptations need to be made

The general rule is that if you are exercising prior to getting pregnant, then you can continue exercising as you were, adapting as required with support and advice from a qualified, experienced and registered exercise professional, and your doctor. 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 exercise is likely to be of benefit to you. Before embarking on any new exercise it's important check in with your maternity health expert which will likely include your GP.

Sherylene Orsborn, REPs registered trainer at So Active provides support with pre and post-natal exercise. She shares that the benefits of physical activity to both the mother and baby are significant compared to the inactive mother-to-be. For example, decreased discomfort, reduced cramp and fluid retention, improved stamina, and a greater ability to cope with stress. She also notes that more research is coming out to suggest physically active pregnant women have a shorter labour, and fewer complications during labour. This is on top of the usual health and wellbeing benefits of moving.

In later pregnancy, many women find exercising in water can be helpful with the buoyancy in the water offering support for extra weight, and allows extra movement, but land based exercise works well as well.

Sherylene recommends that those who have a regular gym programme or attend standard group exercise classes make some modifications from 16 weeks gestation, including avoiding prolonged periods on your back and avoid increasing intra-abdominal pressure as happens when you do prone holds or crunches. These changes will vary somewhat, and the best person to advise you on this is a registered exercise professional.

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. Wearing comfy and breathable clothing, staying hydrated and avoiding exercise in extreme temperatures will assist with this.

During pregnancy your body produces relaxin, and this hormone acts in many ways, with one of the side effects being more laxity or movement in joints and muscles. This laxity can contribute to the commonly experienced lower back and pelvic pain many pregnant women experience. It also increases your likelihood of a muscle strain or injury if muscles are overstretched. Developing awareness of your posture, breathing and how to activate and relax your pelvic floor muscles can be very beneficial to pregnancy, as well as birth and recovery.

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 into exercise.

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. Taking classes or doing sessions with a qualified, experienced and registered trainer is a great way of ensuring you stay regular with your training and they will be able to give you exercises to do between classes suitable to your needs. A good trainer will ensure that you not only feel good now but that the future you is minimally effected by pregnancy. REPs registered exercise professionals have some handy information brochures for prenatal and postnatal exercisers.

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. 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 safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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