

3 March 2020

Media Release – Exercise and Pregnancy – What you need to know

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



### Exercise and Pregnancy - What You Need to Know

While benefits of exercise are well known and extend to pregnancy, advice given to women during pregnancy can vary. This is especially true when it comes from well-meaning friends and family, and generic advice available online.

This can result in women being confused about exercising during pregnancy and in many cases, reducing their activity more than may be needed. By doing this they may miss out on a range of benefits to both them and their baby.

The modern approach to exercise in pregnancy is based on an understanding that there are general exercise guidelines, but more specific exercise recommendations should be based on the needs, history and life style of the individual woman, and developed with an appropriately qualified and experienced exercise professional. This means that the specific exercise recommended will vary between individuals in pregnancy.

The general rule is that if you are exercising prior to pregnancy, then you can continue exercising as you were, adapting as required with support and advice from a qualified and experienced exercise professional and your doctor. If you are a non-exerciser, then pregnancy is not the right time to be starting a vigorous new programme, but regular and gentle sessions will likely be of benefit to you.

As the physical effects of pregnancy on the body progress through trimesters, there are also physical size factors that can alter exercise choices. Many women find exercising in water can be helpful, as the buoyancy in the water offers support for extra weight, and allows more movement, but land-based exercise also works well.

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 a number of pregnant women experience. It can also increase your likelihood of a muscle strain or injury if muscles are overstretched.

Another area to manage and maintain are pelvic floor muscles. Throughout pregnancy and after birth, pelvic floor muscles which support the bladder, bowel and uterus, can weaken.

So before embarking on any new exercise, check in with your maternity carer for their important guidance. And also, make sure that your exercise professional has the right knowledge, competency and skill to support you during and after pregnancy. There is an information brochure called *Pre and Post Natal Exercise Advice* available from REPs registered exercise professionals which provides a wealth of useful information.

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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](http://www.icreps.org)

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**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

