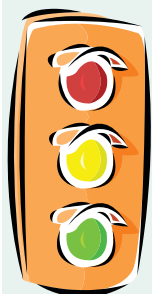


*Physical Activity*

# **During Pregnancy**





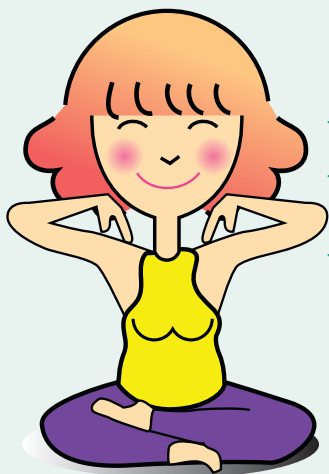
# Get the Green Light First!

There was a time when pregnant women were encouraged to avoid physical activity. Fortunately, attitudes towards pregnancy have changed and medical experts now recommend regular physical activity as part of a healthy pregnancy (Government of Canada, 2007).

**Talk to your health care provider before starting or continuing any physical activity routine.**

## Benefits of regular physical activity during pregnancy:

- ✓ Improves posture.
- ✓ Relieves back pain and muscle tension.
- ✓ Helps prevent leg cramps, varicose veins and hemorrhoids.
- ✓ Helps make everyday activity less difficult.
- ✓ Helps prevent pregnancy-related complications such as gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia.
- ✓ Helps you cope with stress.
- ✓ Helps you prepare mentally and physically for labour and delivery.
- ✓ Helps you recover more quickly after baby is born.



# Aerobic Activity Guidelines During Pregnancy

Any physical activity should always be preceded by a brief warm-up (10-15 minutes) and followed by a short cool-down (10-15 minutes).

**Frequency** - begin slowly and build to three or four times per week.

**Intensity** - you should be able to carry on a verbal conversation.

**Time** - attempt 15 minutes, even if it means reducing the intensity. Rest periods may be helpful.

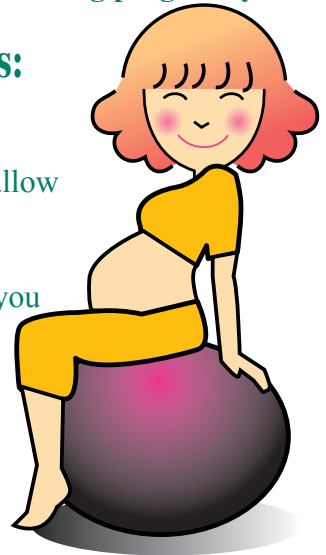
**Type** - non weight-bearing or low-impact endurance activities such as walking, swimming, stationary cycling, aquatic exercises, low impact aerobics.

## Strengthening Your Muscles

Help your body adjust to the many changes during pregnancy:

### Guidelines for Strength Exercises:

- ✓ May be performed 2 or 3 times per week.
- ✓ Take one day of rest between sessions to allow your muscles to recover and get stronger.
- ✓ Always slowly stretch the muscle groups you exercise.

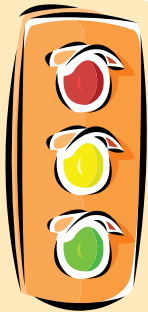


# Safety First!

## Here are some tips to ensure a safe and enjoyable routine:

- Avoid strenuous activity during the 1st trimester when risks and discomforts of pregnancy are highest.
- Exercise regularly, but do not overexert yourself - take periodic rest intervals.
- Avoid exercising on your back after your fourth month of pregnancy.
- Avoid activities which involve physical contact or a risk of falling.
- Always breathe normally during exercise - do not strain or hold your breath.

## Reasons to stop physical activity and consult your health care provider:



- Excessive shortness of breath.
- Chest pain.
- Painful uterine contractions (more than 6 - 8 per hour).
- Vaginal bleeding.
- Any “gush” of fluid from vagina (suggesting premature rupture of the membranes).
- Dizziness or fainting.