

MUMHOOD

BY

FRAME

# PREGNANCY EXERCISE GUIDELINES

## Welcome to MumHood!

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As you embark on this exciting stage of your life, it can be really confusing as to what you can and can't do when it comes to exercise. At Frame, we're here to help you understand the demands on your ever-changing body throughout each trimester and to help you make the right exercise choices.

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There is now plenty of research to prove that staying active during pregnancy has many benefits to both your mental and physical wellbeing.

## Here are some of the benefits:

- ▶ Helps strengthen your body and overall endurance in preparation for labour
- ▶ Helps you maintain a base level of fitness
- ▶ Helps reduce backache, constipation, bloating and swelling
- ▶ May help prevent, or treat gestational diabetes
- ▶ Increases your energy levels
- ▶ Helps promote healthy weight gain during pregnancy
- ▶ Improves circulation
- ▶ Helps to relieve stress and muscle tension
- ▶ Improves your mood
- ▶ Promotes better sleep
- ▶ Aids your body's recovery after birth, including the strength and tone of your pelvic floor and core muscles
- ▶ Strengthening the back and postural muscles can go a long way to preparing your body for coping with the stresses of being a new mum
- ▶ Helps you get back into training more easily after the birth

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## Is exercise safe when pregnant?

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Yes! In most cases, exercise is perfectly safe and offers many health benefits.

You will inevitably gain weight, growing a baby will do that and it's a beautiful thing! Now is not the time to exercise for weight loss, and neither is it the time to start a new exercise regime. This doesn't necessarily mean don't exercise. If your body hasn't been preconditioned to a particular form of exercise, it would be more beneficial to stick to pregnancy specific classes or work with a pre and postnatal trainer.

If you have been exercising regularly prior to pregnancy, you can continue with the same types of exercise, so long as you bear in mind these exercise guidelines and understand the pregnancy modifications. We would however recommend sticking to specific pregnancy classes if you are in any doubt.

A bit of science... Your baby is surrounded by fluid in the amniotic sac, which is nestled inside the uterus, which is surrounded by the organs, muscles, and your physical body. This creates a rather safe environment for your developing baby.

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However even with this protection, it is recommended that you avoid high-impact exercise and not to over-push yourself, before you become bigger and you have your bump as a constant reminder! We also want to consider your pelvic floor muscles, so choosing low impact options and exercises will be beneficial and can reduce the risk of issues later on.

## Is your pregnancy low risk?

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Exercise does not put you at risk in a normal pregnancy, however you should always consult with your healthcare provider (GP / Midwife) before starting any exercise routine.

If you are categorised as a 'low risk' pregnancy, then these guidelines will hopefully give you more in-depth information that will allow you to choose the correct type of exercise / classes for you, and help you to understand how to modify. However, for anything other than a low-risk pregnancy, you should always listen to your healthcare provider or seek more specific personal advice from a specialist.

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## How much should I train when pregnant?

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The ACOG ([www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)) guidelines states at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. An aerobic activity is one in which you move large muscles of the body (like those in the legs and arms) in a rhythmic way. Moderate intensity means you are moving enough to raise your heart rate and start sweating. You should be able to still talk normally, but you cannot sing. You want to work to your 70% max.

By no means does this mean that you need to do 150 minutes of fitness classes (although we're sure you'll feel great if you can), as brisk walking, gardening, running around after a toddler, will all fit into this category.

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## Training in your 1st Trimester

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Many people are told to hold off exercise in the first trimester. This is your first stage of change and you and your body may feel extremely tired. You may not even feel like exercising, which is perfectly normal and ok. Listen to your body and how you feel. It is important to give yourself a break and rest when you feel you most need it.

For those who want to keep exercising; exercising in your 1st and 2nd trimester has been correlated with feeling better in the 3rd trimester; a decrease in perceived exertion during labour and is also associated with fewer symptoms and discomforts of pregnancy. (ACOG, [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org))

That said, it is advised to lower the intensity, the length of aerobic exercise during your first trimester, especially between 8-14 weeks, for all the reasons mentioned above.

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## Pregnancy Guidelines

The bigger, more important things to be aware of are the things that may not appear too obvious and are essential to keep in mind if you are going to keep exercising regularly.

- ▶ **Always let your instructor know that you are pregnant at the start of a class** so they can help you with modifications.
- ▶ **Avoid contact sports, rapid changes in direction, and activities where falling is more likely** (eg. kickboxing, netball, horse riding, skiing, hockey...)

Exercises that involve jerking actions and sudden movement can place stress on joints, leading to postural misalignments or joint injuries. The risk of back injuries associated with weight training are also increased, so get some guidance on how best to support your body if you want to continue with weight training. If you are a regular Dance Cardio goer and have been dancing at Frame for a long time, you are still able to join but please tell the instructor at the start of the class. You would want to make sure you keep it low impact and avoid any twists and turns. Please take the appropriate modifications when necessary.

- ▶ **Avoid bouncing when in a stretch (stick to isometric stretches) and OVER-stretching.** It is good to stay mobile as possible, especially into the later stages of pregnancy when your body needs it most. Though be aware to limit the stretching of joints, especially if you are already hypermobile.

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Pregnancy increases the hormone Relaxin from the very early stages of pregnancy. This means that you will feel like you are more flexible when pregnant, but actually the Relaxin is softening your joints and ligaments in preparation for labour. You don't want to soften the joints any further by over-stretching, as this will likely cause issues with recovery post-birth, when you're trying to knit your body back together. We would suggest you stretch to 70% of your maximum and think of 'strength' and alignment within your stretches rather than trying to get too deep.

Although Relaxin levels decline after birth it can stay in your system for up to 18 months post birth, so think wisely with not to overstretch during your postnatal recovery period too.

▶ **Keep hydrated.** Always have water with you when exercising, and take regular sips.

▶ **Do not exercise to the point of exhaustion.**

▶ **Reduce the intensity of your exercise.** If you're doing a weights-based class or training, then reduce the weight you're lifting. If you are doing a cardio class, then reduce the intensity. So for example, if you usually use a 12kg kettlebell, think about switching to an 8kg. You never want to feel like you're working at maximum effort. A nice way to think about it, is to work to 70% of maximum effort at the most.

▶ **Stay away from any exercise that puts direct pressure on the 'rectus abdominis' or your '6-pack muscles'.** For example ab crunches, sit ups, ab prep in Pilates, or 'knee to nose' in yoga or heavy weights over your head in a fitness class. Keep full body or loaded twists small or avoid if you are feeling a lot of pressure through you mid trunk area. The long 6 pack muscle will start to stretch to create a parting (diastasis recti) of the abdominals walls for your baby to grow, leaving this area vulnerable to tearing, especially in the third trimester. If you see any doming (a bulge



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popping out from your mid stomach area) for example when holding a plank, stop the exercise as it's putting too much pressure on the abdominals.

▶ **You are ok to work your transverse abdominals, and oblique muscles,** through controlled Pilates-based moves, planks, whole-body exercises and side bends.

Loaded twists should be kept light and to a small controlled range of movement, so not to strain or potentially tear the mid abdominal line (diastasis recti). Remember to modify where necessary and to take the easier option when adaptations are given.

▶ **Avoid any 'closed twists'** where pressure is put on the abdominal cavity, should be avoided, for example 'revolved triangle' and 'revolved side angle' poses in yoga.

▶ **Avoid any deep backbends and inversions** in yoga classes.

▶ **Squats are your friend during pregnancy.** This is the easiest way to automatically work your pelvic floor and to work on muscular endurance for your birth, where you are likely to spend a lot of time in the squat position!

▶ **Lying on your back is not a 'no go' but you must take care and listen to your body.** New research in the ACOG ([www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)) has shown that lying on your back (for exercises such as hip bridges, and footwork in Reformer Pilates) no longer needs to be completely avoided from the second trimester. However, lying on your back can start to feel uncomfortable as you move through your pregnancy and can start to limit blood flow due to the pressure that the weight of your baby is putting on your main artery, so if you start to feel dizzy or uncomfortable then simply roll to your left side and come out of the position.

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## Classes at Frame for pregnancy

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At Frame, we offer **3 specific Prenatal classes: Prenatal Yoga, Prenatal Reformer Pilates and Prenatal Strength.** If you haven't been exercising much prior to pregnancy, we would suggest that you stick to these classes, as they are designed with the pregnant body in mind.

We have created a more in-depth **EXERCISING SAFELY DURING PREGNANCY** video, which can be found [here](#). We really recommend watching this before you start exercising during your pregnancy as you will learn more about what is happening within your body and how to modify your exercise correctly for your body.

Please always tell your instructor that you are pregnant at the beginning of the class so that they can help you modify. Within a Pregnancy class, the Instructor will be able to help modify for PGP or any other pregnancy-specific issues.

Frame Barre and Frame Lift, both come with set pregnancy modifications, so your instructor will always be able to tell you which sections you should take different options for.

Frame Barre is a great option to choose as it is low impact and the majority of the class is safe for pregnancy. You will need to modify the abs tracks at the end, which your instructor will be able to help you with.

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Frame Lift is safe if you are used to lifting weights. However, you should drop your weights down a level so that you only work to 70% of your maximum. Be extra careful with lifting weights overhead, make sure they are much lighter than usual because of the pressure it puts on the rectus abdominis and potential for causing diastasis recti (separation of the ab muscles). Aim for good posture to support your back with your changed centre of gravity.

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## Returning to exercise post baby

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We offer a selection of Postnatal classes, both on demand, and in the studios.

Our Postnatal classes are specific body conditioning classes for the Postnatal body where you can exercise and bring your baby.

**To join these classes you must have had your 6 week check with your GP / Health specialist saying they sign you off for exercise.**

We unfortunately will not be able to have you in class until you have your 6-week check.

Please don't put pressure on yourself to come back at 6 weeks postnatal, take your time and return once you feel ready (we're all different and this is not a race, it's important to listen to your body and your baby also.)