

Exercise: Good for You, Good for Baby

It's common knowledge that regular exercise is all-the-more important during pregnancy. Why? Well, for one thing, because the combination of developing child, hormonal fluctuations, and other factors means you will likely gain a moderate amount of weight as part of the natural process. Moreover, as any mother will tell you, delivering a baby can be a physically traumatic - albeit joyous - experience; exercise in the months leading up to that day helps strengthen your muscles and heart, which can be placed under severe stress during delivery.

Less well-known is that exercising during pregnancy may make for a healthier child. Consider a recent study involving pregnant women (ages 30-35) who were divided into two groups - one group that performed moderate-intensity aerobic exercise for 30 minutes per day at least three times per week, and a second group that did not perform regular exercise over the same time period. The study revealed the following:



- Fetal heart rate was significantly lower (a good thing, within reason) in the exercise group during fetal breathing and non-breathing movement periods.
- Fetal short-term and overall heart rate variability (indicative of a mature neurologic system) were higher in the exercise group during breathing movements.

- The exercise-exposed fetuses had higher measures of vagal (cardiovascular) control during breathing movements.

Talk to your doctor about the benefits of exercise and which specific exercises are most appropriate to perform (and which are best to avoid altogether) during pregnancy.



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