

Gestational Diabetes and Exercise

Exercise can help you keep your blood sugar in a normal range. That's because your body uses more blood sugar when you exercise.

Exercise regularly

Your doctor may want you to exercise each day. The best time depends on when your blood sugar is highest. Ask about exercise during pregnancy at your first prenatal care visit. Your doctor will work with you to make an exercise plan that fits your needs:

- Aim to exercise for 30 to 60 minutes a day at moderate intensity. This means you are moving enough to raise your heart rate and start sweating. But you can still talk normally.
- Try breaking up daily exercise into 2 or 3 sessions. For example, take a 15-minute walk after each meal.
- Exercise with a friend or your partner. This may help you stick to your exercise plan. Find a yoga or Pilates program designed for pregnancy.
- Go at a pace that you are comfortable with. Don't tire yourself out.
- Exercising may help decrease some of the common symptoms of pregnancy. These include bloating, constipation, and backaches. A stationary bike is a better choice than a standard bike. It will stop you from getting off balance with your growing belly.

Exercise safely

Ask your doctor about exercise safety measures for you and your baby. Walking, swimming, and low-impact or water aerobics are often the safest things to do. Other safety tips include:

- Don't do activities where you jump, turn, twist, stop or start quickly, or lift heavy weights.
- Don't exercise on your back after the first trimester. This can put too much pressure on an important vein. It can limit blood flow to the baby.
- Use a sports bra during pregnancy to support your breasts. You may also want to use a belly support belt later in pregnancy.
- Don't get overheated. Don't do hot yoga or hot Pilates. Don't raise your heart rate to a level that makes it hard to talk.
- Drink plenty of water.
- If you use insulin, carry a carbohydrate snack with you.
- If you walk or do low-impact aerobics, wear sturdy shoes.
- If you haven't eaten in 2 or more hours, have a light snack before exercising.
- Don't do contact sports that put you at risk of being hit in the belly.

- Don't go sky diving or scuba diving. And don't do things that may cause a serious fall. These include horseback riding, gymnastics, and off-road cycling.

It's not advised to exercise when pregnant if you have any of these health conditions:

- Some types of heart and lung diseases
- Pregnant with twins or more, and at risk for preterm labor
- Preterm labor or your water has broken (ruptured membranes)
- Placenta previa later than 26 weeks of pregnancy
- Preeclampsia or high blood pressure due to pregnancy
- Severe anemia
- Cervical insufficiency or cerclage

When to stop exercising and call your healthcare provider

Call your doctor right away or go to the emergency room if you have any of these:

- Belly pain
- Shortness of breath before starting exercise
- Vaginal bleeding
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Decreased fetal movement
- Preterm contractions
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain or swelling
- Fluid leaking from the vagina