

mama's on the move

Simple steps and stress-free fitness advice to keep you going strong, nine months long

by Marygrace Taylor

If you get tired just thinking about exercise, don't worry—prenatal workouts shouldn't be extreme. Instead, think of them as a way to start your life as a mom in a healthy, balanced way.

Your goal throughout these nine months should be maintaining your current level of fitness, supporting the recommended amount of weight gain (for most women, that's no more than 30 pounds), and strengthening the pelvic floor muscles that will support you during labor, says Hal Danzer, M.D., a fertility specialist and ob/gyn in Beverly Hills, California. Of course, before resuming exercise or starting any new program, check with your doctor, and even when you've been given the green light, listen to your body at all times. "You should feel energized, not exhausted, and always be able to hold a conversation," says Tracey Mallett, a prenatal fitness expert and creator of the workout DVD *Fit For Pregnancy*. Nausea, lightheadedness, cramping, or shortness of breath are all signs you should stop and call your doctor, says Danzer.

Ready to lace up your sneakers? Consider these by-the-trimester exercise tips:

1st trimester

- **Now's the time to develop healthy workout habits.** Low blood sugar is a concern for pregnant women, so keep it at bay by eating a small pre- or post-workout snack (a mix of protein and complex carbs—like peanut butter on whole grain toast—is best). Also, be sure to stay hydrated during exercise with frequent sips of water.

- **The best workout choices are low-impact.** Go for a walk, swim, or do prenatal Pilates or yoga. More vigorous activities like using an elliptical machine or spinning are OK during the first trimester if you were in good shape before becoming pregnant. "The big issue is keeping your heart rate under 130 beats per minute," says Danzer. Maintaining this heart rate helps prevent your core body temperature—and your baby—from getting too hot.

2nd trimester

- **Avoid working out while lying on your back.** That position can restrict blood flow to your baby. If there's a favorite exercise you want to do, stack pillows high enough to lift your head above your heart, and limit the time spent on that move to less than five minutes. Or, roll over to your side to do exercises such as leg raises and knee extensions.

- **Feeling off balance is common.** During the second trimester, your ever-expanding belly changes your center of gravity. If you feel unsteady while doing certain exercises, hold onto a chair, countertop, or even your partner (it's the least he can do!).

3rd trimester

- **It's completely natural for your body to want to slow down.** Your increasing size is requiring more energy to move around. "Focus on walking and performing stretches to open the pelvis and keep your body flexible," Mallett says. (For ideas, see "Yoga for mamas-to-be" on page 54)

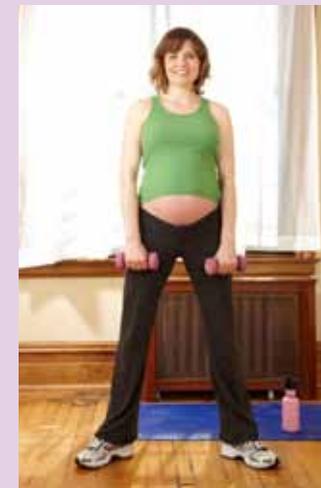
- **Be careful not to overstretch.** Pregnancy hormones helpfully get you ready for childbirth by relaxing all your ligaments and joints, but they can also put you at risk of overextending yourself. Stick to the stretches you've been doing and avoid the temptation to test your newfound flexibility—don't even think about trying that split you've never been able to do!

mini circuit for moms in the making

From Tracey Mallett's prenatal workout book, *Super Fit Mama*, these moves combine strength and cardio to build and maintain muscle tone while keeping your heart rate up (but remember, don't go higher than 130 beats per minute!). Perform the exercises in order, three to four times a week, based on your energy level.

1 plié squat with shoulder circles

TARGETS SHOULDERS, QUADS, HAMSTRINGS, AND GLUTES
POST-BABY BENEFIT PICKING UP YOUR BABY WITH EASE



A Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, toes pointing out. Hold 3- to 5-pound weights, hands resting on your thighs. From there, raise your arms up and forward to shoulder height.



B Bend your legs so that your knees are over your toes, and then move your arms out to the side so they're parallel to the floor. Bring your arms back to the front, and then lower them down to the start position. Repeat 8 times, then reverse the order so that you lift your arms to the side first, then front, then down. Repeat 8 times.

2

hamstring curl

TARGETS HAMSTRINGS, GLUTES, AND CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM
POST-BABY BENEFIT STILL HAVING SOME BREATH LEFT AFTER CHASING YOUR TOT



From a standing position with your feet together, step to the left (your legs should be about shoulder distance apart), and bend your right knee to lift your heel toward your glutes. Meanwhile, bend your elbows, bringing your forearms parallel to the floor. Repeat, alternating legs, for 60 seconds. Keep both knees bent at all times and focus on squeezing your hamstrings as you bring your heels up.

3

modified push-up with leg extension

TARGETS CHEST, ARMS, ABS, GLUTES, AND HAMSTRINGS

POST-BABY BENEFIT HAULING GROCERIES, YOUR BABY, AND HER CAR SEAT



A Place your hands shoulder-width apart on the corners of a coffee table or chair (during the third trimester, modify by placing your hands against a wall instead). Extend your legs behind you in a push-up position. Lift your right leg off the floor to hip height. If you start to feel a strain in your lower back, don't raise your leg as high.



B Inhale as you bend your elbows toward the coffee table or wall, and then exhale as you draw your abs to your spine and straighten your elbows. Do 10 reps, then repeat with your left leg lifted.

4

knee twist rotation

TARGETS LEGS, OBLIQUES, AND CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

POST-BABY BENEFIT GETTING OFF THE COUCH WITHOUT HAVING TO GRUNT "OOF!"



Start by standing with your arms overhead. Lift your left leg toward your chest and bend your elbows to lower your arms to shoulder height. At the same time, twist your upper body toward your knee. (This might get tougher as your belly gets bigger, especially in the third trimester, so modify by just raising your knee toward your chest without the twist). Alternate legs and twist to the other side. Repeat for 60 seconds.

YOGA FOR MAMAS-TO-BE

Prenatal yoga can make for an easier delivery by helping you stay relaxed, focused, and confident on the big day, says Jennifer Derryberry Mann, a prenatal yoga instructor in Athens, Georgia, and editor of *Belly Button Bliss: A Collection of Happy Birth Stories*. Here's a short sequence she suggests for getting your om on:

1. Butterfly Pose Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet together. Open your knees as wide as is comfortable. Lean forward to grasp your shins, lowering your torso toward your legs. Take 5 to 7 breaths, focusing your at-

tention on your lower back, hips, and pelvis. Release your shins and slowly return to sitting.

2. Dancing Mama Pose Get on all fours with your shoulders over your hands and your hips over your knees. Extend your left

leg to the side, keeping your foot on the floor. Inhale and lift your left arm out to the side and up. Exhale, lower your arm, and sit back toward your heels. Repeat 5 to 7 times, then switch sides.

3. Side-lying Rest Pose Lay on

the floor on your side with knees bent. Rest your head on your arm, tuck a pillow between your knees, and lay a hand on your belly. Breathe slowly and deeply, taking a few minutes to connect with your body and your baby.

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