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WHETHER YOU have a natural, assisted or caesarean delivery, it's pretty tiring, and that's just the beginning of the hard work! You can prepare your body to cope, and to recover quicker: by safely staying fit and healthy, and by listening to, and working with, your changing body. Regular, appropriate exercise will improve fitness and strength, prevent excess weight gain, and help you to maintain a positive self-image. A specialist fitness programme can mean a healthier, more comfortable pregnancy, and even an easier and quicker delivery.

Don't try to dramatically increase your fitness during pregnancy, but look to maintain a basic fitness level. Modify your exercise as your pregnancy progresses, listen to your body, and don't over-exert yourself. Try to maintain moderate aerobic exercise, and remember consistency is key. Aim for 20 – 30 minutes, most days of the week, of power walking, jogging or stationary cycling (no spinning classes!). Swimming is a great exercise, especially in the final months. Listen to your body, and stop if you feel hot, tired, breathless or dizzy. Drink plenty of water, wear a good sports bra and supportive shoes. Poor posture, lower back pain and a weak pelvic floor can all be prevented or alleviated with the right type of exercise, so make sure you include 'core strength' work.

The Core is made up of four muscles that stabilise your lower back and pelvis, including your pelvic floor muscles. During pregnancy these muscles become very stretched as they support the ever-increasing weight of your uterus. Repeated bending as you care for your new baby continues to place further stress on these muscles after the birth.



Holly Dawson

# Exercising safely during pregnancy

You've heard about the benefits of an 'active birth', but how about preparing your body to have the stamina and strength required for labour, birth and beyond?

Remember that weight loss, or reduced weight gain, should not be your only goal or focus. Aim to be healthy, strong and fit – enjoy healthy food and exercise with this in mind, and you'll look and feel great!

Remember you should always have the approval of your GP or Midwife to exercise during pregnancy, and consult a qualified trainer or instructor. No More Excuses provides highly qualified and experienced one-to-one personal training for pregnant and post-natal mums. 🌸

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 ■ For more information visit [www.nomoreexcuses.co.uk](http://www.nomoreexcuses.co.uk) call 0700 340 1287 or email [wendy@nomoreexcuses.co.uk](mailto:wendy@nomoreexcuses.co.uk)

## A few myths dispelled

- Fiction** Exercise during pregnancy diverts blood away from the baby and can even cause a miscarriage.
- Fact** This is very dated advice (1956) and has since been proven to be untrue. Moderate exercise during pregnancy is beneficial to mother and baby, can alleviate and prevent many common pregnancy complaints, and can even contribute to an easier, shorter labour!
- Fiction** Sit-ups are the best way to keep a flat stomach and get back in shape after pregnancy.
- Fact** Exercising on your back after the first trimester is not recommended, and after the birth, traditional crunches will give your abs a 'domed' shape and strain your lower back. They could also further draw apart the rectus abdominus muscle, which often splits during pregnancy (this is painless and totally natural – your midwife or exercise instructor will be able to tell you of yours have parted). Core strength work is much more effective and will also help with pelvic floor control.