



FFS Guide to Exercise During Pregnancy

At FFS we've worked with many prenatal clients in classes and through Personal Training. We fully recommend a moderate level of exercise once you have been cleared by your doctor. The benefits of exercise during pregnancy include:

- Control of weight gain
- Reduced risk of high blood pressure problems (e.g. hypertension and pre-eclampsia)
- Reduced risk of gestational diabetes
- Improved/maintained level of fitness
- Better mood & better sleep
- Better physical preparation for childbirth
- Quicker recovery postpartum

While many women can feel cautious regarding exercise during pregnancy, it's important to remember that research has shown that there to be no adverse outcomes for mother or baby.

The main questions our members and clients have had are covered in the following areas:

Can I lift weights?

Resistance training is safe provided you follow a few dos and don'ts in terms of specific exercises during your second and third trimester. Taking this into account, there is still a wide range of suitable exercises. Upper back strength can reduce low back pain and improved strength in the muscles around the hip joint can aid childbirth. Additionally, a focus on core and pelvic floor strength helps with quicker recovery postpartum, irrespective of the type of delivery.

Nutrition

The main guidelines for nutrition still apply during pregnancy – eat real food (i.e. minimally or not processed) and consistently make better choices. Eating 3-4 meals plus 2-3 snacks will account for the 300-500 additional calories (on average) your body needs each day to support caloric demands during development. Eating slowly and to 80% rather than stuffed means you'll give yourself and your baby enough nutrients without overeating and risking excess weight gain.

Amount & Intensity

150 minutes of moderate exercise spread throughout the week is recommended. For women who have not been active prior to pregnancy, steadily building up from 5-10 minutes at a time is a safe way to progress. Usually when we do a tough session, we reach at least 8/10 in terms of intensity. During pregnancy it's recommended that we bring this down to 7/10. A great tool is the talk test, i.e. can you hold a conversation while exercising. If the answer is no, it's likely that you've exceeded the 7/10 mark. Note that it's important to stay hydrated and not exercise for more than 1 hour, particularly during summer months.

Mindset

A shift in mindset around exercise is often the key to consistently reducing intensity and enjoying exercise. Active women often train for a specific goal rather than exercise which means working towards improving a time, load lifted or preparing for a road race for example. During pregnancy, we focus on exercise for the health of mother and baby rather than training for performance. As well as the benefits listed above, this allows for improvement in posture and alignment, core and pelvic floor strength as well as healthy aerobic function.

Be Your Own Coach

Listen to your body and do the amount of movement or exercise that you're able for on that day. You may not feel able for an exercise or workout that felt great the previous week. Do the amount and type that feels good each day. This might mean changing exercises as your pregnancy progresses, reducing the number or sets/reps of one or more exercises, just performing a warm up and stretching, or going for a short walk instead of a planned class. Additionally, balance and joint stability can both feel different as your pregnancy progresses. The more you stay conscious of how your body feels day to day, the more you'll be able to enjoy exercise pre and postpartum.

If you are interested in 1:1 Personal Training or Small Group Training for Pregnancy in Leeson Street contact aoife@ffs.ie, or sinead@ffs.ie for Ivy Exchange.

For more information regarding exercise during pregnancy:

- [Article by the American College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists.](#)
- [Infographic by UK Chief Medical Officers](#)