



# Exercise is Good

Pregnancy is a healthy condition, and with few exceptions pregnant women can and should continue to take advantage of the physical and psychological benefits of regular exercise.

Generally, participation in a wide range of physical activity may be safe, with the possible exception of those sports with a high risk of falls or rough contact. The safety of any particular sport or activity depends upon the specific movements and circumstances required by the sport:

- Sports with a high potential for rough contact (hockey, soccer, or basketball) or significant risk of falls (gymnastics, horseback riding, downhill skiing, mountain biking, racquet sports) may increase the risk of abdominal trauma and damage to the placenta or injury to the baby.
- Pregnant women who exercise at altitudes above 6000 ft should be aware of the signs of altitude sickness; exercise should be stopped, the woman should descend from altitude, and medical attention should be sought.
- Scuba diving is not recommended during pregnancy, because the baby is at risk for decompression sickness. The fetal lung circulation cannot filter bubble formation that may occur at depth.
- After the first trimester, pregnant women should avoid lying flat on their backs. The weight of the growing uterus compresses large blood vessels and interferes with blood flow to the uterus and back to the heart.

## **Warning signs to stop exercising**

- Vaginal bleeding
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness
- Calf pain or swelling
- Preterm contractions
- Decreased fetal movement

## **Conditions which make exercise unsafe**

- Significant heart disease
- Lung disease
- Incompetent cervix
- Twins
- Bleeding
- Placenta previa
- Premature labor
- Ruptured membranes
- High blood pressure