



Q: Dear Coach: I am 32 and just pregnant! I'm excited by the news but I am also self-conscious about the changes that will occur in my body and I'd like to start exercising! What should I know? - "Mum 2 B"

A: Dear Mum: Congratulations! The benefits of exercise during pregnancy are numerous - you can increase or maintain cardiovascular endurance; muscle tone, strength and endurance; and postural balance. You may effectively manage weight gain; maintain good circulation and digestion; remain social; and feel a connection to your body. Exercise can aid relaxation and sleeping patterns; manage stress and feelings of well-being; and maintain high self-esteem.

Regardless of your pre-natal level of fitness, you should see a doctor and seek medical clearance for your participation in a fitness program. Most gyms, coaches, or trainers, would like to have these details on file, too.

If you are brand new to a fitness regime, the recommendations are that you wait until the conclusion of your first trimester. At or about week 15 is a good time to begin. If you were previously fit, you may continue participation but be gentle and allow plenty of conservative breaks.

As you participate in your fitness regime, guidelines suggest that you engage in a well-rounded program that may include cardiovascular fitness, muscular endurance and strength, and flexibility. We recommend learning strategies for relaxation and seeking nutritional guidance, also. Your exercise frequency should be moderate; approximately 3 - 4 times per week, with short durations of mild to moderate cardiovascular effort - you should be able to continue a conversation comfortably during the work-out. Work-out sessions should be of short duration: allow approximately 25 - 30 minutes. Please note that previously fit women may be able to continue their routines with only a few changes to assure safety. You need to monitor adequate caloric and nutritional intake, hydration, and avoid over-heating.

There are general postural restrictions, also. Typically these include avoidance of lying supine (on your back) from the 2nd trimester, deep lunges and squats, advanced balance exercises or inversions, and twisting in such a way that it compresses your belly.

Enjoy this special time! Post-natal exercise is also highly recommended, with similar restrictions to pregnancy for the first 6 - 8 weeks. Again, continue speaking with your physician about recommendations for your participation.

Yours in health and fitness
The Coach

Guest response - Sara Pazell, director of L'Amour Yoga Institute Pty Ltd, is a strength and conditioning coach, occupational therapist, personal trainer and group fitness instructor. She is a fellow Paradise Training trainer with Coach Tim.