

✿ **Please contact Nina Tappin for more information and specific exercises tailored for you. www.climbingphysiotherapy.com**

1ST TRIMESTER

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Your body is busy creating life and multiplying cells in your womb. The placenta is developing, and your hormones are all over the place. You may also be experiencing morning sickness. The best thing to do is focus on good nutrition and healthy snacking. Eating and drinking can help with morning sickness, and this will help the energy needed for the major work happening inside your body. Try eating when you feel nauseous, this is esp. true if you are exercising. Getting to grips now with the right foods, drinks and supplements should be a priority. Supplements like folic acid, vitamin D, DHA essential fatty acids, and other pregnancy specific vitamins are recommended to support the development of your baby. Eating lots of greens, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates will also help you acquire these nutrients. Keeping snacks handy will be important for a pregnant lady. Some examples are: apple, cheese and crackers; and, almonds and raisins. Good hydration drinks are lemon or lime in water and coconut water. Speak to a nutritionist for more information.

EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

The advice from doctor's and midwives is to continue your normal fitness regimes for as long as you feel comfortable doing so. They also advise to avoid taking up a new activity or sport, and to modify risky sports like rock climbing, diving, road biking, skiing, surfing, and contact sports like rugby. You obviously want to avoid falls, lead falls as a climber, and contact collisions. This can increase your risk of miscarriage.

Keeping fit and strong pre pregnancy is a good idea. You will be giving up some forms of exercise as your pregnancy progresses, so, the fitter you are going into pregnancy the better. But as previously mentioned, do not try to take up running, or a new sport because you want to make up for lost time. Speak to a physiotherapist, or a fitness professional who has an interest in pre and post natal exercise if you are unsure about anything. Doing safe aerobic and strength exercises are very beneficial during pregnancy, but should also be tailored for you.

REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

PREGNANCY EXERCISE ADVICE SHEET

- maintain current fitness levels and strength of core, upper and lower body
- do start pregnancy specific Pilates, core, yoga and fitness classes that are within your limits even if you haven't had much experience in the past, as long as, you are being instructed by a professional
- do start some form of upper and lower body strength training advised by a professional
- start "Kegel" exercises for strengthening and relaxing pelvic floor. Example: pretend to stop your wee and hold for 10 sec x 10. Try to contract slowly, increasing tension up to a count of 10, then slowly release and relax fully before your next repetition. Practice this sitting, lying and in squat positions. Practice strengthening the power of these muscles by contracting as hard as you can, as fast as you can when you sneeze, cough and laugh, or whenever you think about it. Get into the habit now so you can prevent incontinence in your third trimester and post birth. Having these muscles strong during pregnancy will help with the birth process, and recovery after giving birth.
- As well as keeping your pelvic floor strong, you should also think about keeping them flexible, and in some cases, it may be worth investigating loosening trigger points in your perineum. Often, sporty females have tense, tight pelvic floors, that can present as being weak, but are more tight, than actually weak. You would need to see a woman's health physio about this. Your pelvic floor behaves as any other muscle in your body. Working pelvic floor trigger points is best done NOT pregnant as this could possibly lead to miscarriage or early delivery. Although there is no current research to support this, but best to address these issues when not pregnant. A gentle pelvic floor massage, however, is less risky, and can be done during pregnancy, just not heavy trigger point work. Consult with a woman's health physio and/or midwife for advice.
- A good stretch & relax exercise for your pelvic floor that you can do in 1st trimester is holding yourself in a deep squat by holding onto a doorknob or counter, feet flat, heels down on the floor, or on folded towels under your heels to take tension off your calves, and imagine that your pelvic floor is relaxing and opening up and tagging softly downwards, esp. at the back of your perineum. It is called the "**flop & drop**" :) Breathe and hold for approx. 30 secs, come out of the squat by slowly reversing the flop and tense gently to simply recruit the perineum, and then stand back up by leading with your hips and bum, to pivot your hips around your knees. So not to initiate the movement with your knees, but your hips. Repeat 3x. 1-2x day

2ND TRIMESTER

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Your uterus is starting to stretch and expand, including the “round ligaments” that hold your uterus to your pelvic bones. This means that you are likely to feel sharp pains deep in your tummy either on the right, left, or both sides. You may feel these pains when using your abdominals and/or twisting. This is normal, but you should slow down and listen to them. The best position to ease the pain is to stop and curl up gently (bend your spine and pelvis forward) kneeling down or sitting, hug your tummy if need be! Also, kneeling on all fours and breathing slowly, trying to relax that area can help. This is probably a sign that you are doing too much abdominal work and may need to modify your exercise, or sport.

The hormone relaxin has kicked in, in order to help your body start to stretch and expand, so you feel more mobile, and the ligaments of your body will start to soften and lose their stiffness. This means that your tendons and muscles have to support you more, but they too soften and become a bit flimsy from from the relaxin. This is another reason to become fit and strong before conceiving.

Your baby, placenta and uterus are growing, and are therefore pressing on your stomach, intestines, nerves and arteries around your spine and pelvis. This will continue until you give birth. This can lead to leg muscle cramps, nerve problems, varicose veins and indigestion. When you lie on your back the excess weight of the baby, placenta and uterus compress the artery and veins going to and away from the baby, therefore, exercising and sleeping on your back should be avoided. The position that creates the most space for your uterus and baby to stretch, as well as, off loading pressure on your organs and blood vessels, is kneeling on all fours. Second best, standing and leaning forwards onto a table, or counter. I suggest doing this daily. These are also great positions to slow down and relax your breathing. Breathing helps with oxygenation for you and your baby, as well as, decreasing tension in your body and mind. This will become more relevant as each month progresses, so now is a good time to start. This is also a good time to start any “Hypnobirthing” courses or books. You can start practicing breathing, relaxation techniques, as well as, various birth positions.

Your fluid volumes are increasing so your gums may bleed, you may bruise easily, nose bleeds, feet and ankles swell, or you feel like you need to put them up. Do so!! If you have a sitting job, then get up often and go for short walks. Exercise is a great way to shift fluid. Put your feet up at the end of the day and do some reading. The excess fluid volume and pressure coming

from the womb is why some women get varicose veins and haemorrhoids. Some ladies are more prone to this than others. There is some research these days talking about people who are hypermobile are more likely to suffer with varicose veins and haemorrhoids, due to the overly stretching collagen in all there tissue. Swings and roundabouts!

EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

- tummy crunches and anything lying on your back should be avoided. Stick to “core” type exercises like **plank, side plank, supermans, walking hands over a fitball, cable exercises in the gym**. You should not overdo core exercises as you will need to let your tummy stretch and expand rather than tighten too much, however, gentle core recruitment is safe and wise to do at this stage. Do not hold a contraction longer than 10 sec and do not go to normal abdominal classes that are geared towards non pregnant population.
- at this stage you can do exercises on a fitball, ex: lying on your back with your head & upper back on the ball, legs out in a **suspension bridge position (knees bent, hips help up with your bum and legs)** You need to be stable and strong enough to get into and out of the position on the ball, so you must have practiced this one beforehand. Bridging on the floor at this stage is not advised.
- watch thumb and wrist positions when holding onto things. You want to be neutral, or straight at all times, or in positions of extension, not flexion (hand bent back is ok, hand bend forward towards palm is not ok). This is because the tendons in your wrists go flimsy, and can over-stretch in positions of flexion (palms towards forearms). Some women get painful thumbs and wrists in pregnancy which normally continues when their baby is born and is not convenient! Try avoiding this by paying close attention to how you hold and use your thumbs and wrists.
- definitely stretch but always feel the stretch in the muscle not in the tendon, or near joints. Choose positions not on your back, and positions where your lower back and pelvis are NOT over tucked, over arched, or slouched. Important areas to **stretch** are: **calves, hamstrings, quads, inner thighs, glutes, lats, upper back, gentle torso twists in standing, wrist flexors. Check out pictures on www.climbingphysiotherapy.com**
- If you feel pain in your Sacroiliac joints (joints in the back of your pelvis), or pain in your pubic symphysis (front of your pelvis) then you did too much in your session, or you were not in the correct position, likely too wide with

your feet. This should subside within a day. If it does not, see a physiotherapist.

REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

- maintain some core, although ab crunches are out

EXAMPLES: planks & side planks, superman, cable, sideways walking crab walk with band around thighs, gentle climbing ok, soon thinking about a body harness.

- maintain good upper body, wrist and leg strength to handle lifting, carrying and being mobile after the baby is born. Also, in order to help keep your ligaments and tendons robust.

EXAMPLES:

- wall or kitchen counter press ups, dips on a chair hips/knees/ elbows 90 90, upright rows, front and side raises, lat pull downs with band kneeling or sitting, standing band arm rows, balance on 1 leg, single leg squat in mirror barefoot, squats hip width and sumo squats (very good to start now), doorknob squats, functional squats, warrior pose, triangle pose: note for all keep knee caps over mid toes Hold 5-10 sec x 5 R&L, clams, reverse clams are also good.

- maintain cardio fitness levels through safe cycling (you are in a slight bent over posture so good for relieving organ and vessel pressure), cross trainer, stair climbing (taking stairs instead of lift), walking, swimming, and pregnancy specific exercise classes.

- Continue Kegel exercises

3RD TRIMESTER

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

You are growing a big belly! Your pelvis will start to tilt forwards from the weight in the front. For people who are "sway back" or "posterior tuckers" (flat backs), this is quite good, but for people who are already quite forward tilted with arched lower backs, this can cause a problem.. You may need a Serola Sacroiliac belt and get used to tucking under a bit, so that you do not over arch your lower back.

All the things from second trimester are amplified now. Increase pressure on your organs and blood vessels. So, spending time on all fours is important.

Try to do daily if you can. You should be sleeping mostly on your left side, but if this is not comfortable or feels wrong then follow what your body tells you more than what I or anyone else tells you!

Your stomach muscles are being stretched out and you have to allow this to happen. Massaging your tummy with oils helps. Getting your husband/partner to help out while you are on all fours is quite good! You can still do exercise that involve your tummy while doing arm exercises, but time to avoid most core and tummy specific exercises. You can, however, continue “**supermans**” (four point kneeling, pulling lower belly up and in, adding arm and/or leg movements if you are strong enough, and have no pain when doing so).

You will need to wind down exercise and work, and get lots of sleep. Relaxation classes, meditation will be useful. Hypnobirthing books and cd's are great for at home.

EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

- slow things down, it is still good to exercise, but listen to your body. Do, less reps, less exercises per session etc. But your body will tell you.
- your fluid volume is very high now so put your feet up after periods of sitting, standing and exercise
- no exercise lying on your back and you will normally need to support your bump side lying
- if you feel lower back, Sacroiliac Joint (low back of pelvis) or pubic (low front pelvis) pain speak to a physiotherapist ASAP.

REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

- Top rope climbing with a body harness is fine, but again go on feel and choose routes that are not too strenuous on your abdominals to help avoid a split in your lines alba (tissue that separates and holds your right and left superficial abdominals). I have a small split and an umbilical hernia from my first pregnancy and I did not climb at all from 5 months onwards, so it is hard to say what contributes for sure. I am hypermobile, perhaps that was more the reason. I top roped climbed in a body harness up until 8 months pregnant with my second child and the umbilical hernia was no worse afterwards.....
- maintain some shoulder, wrist and upper body strength keeping wrists neutral. Even if that means lifting and carrying light objects. Try to use skills used and practiced from exercise in second trimester into functional recruitment of muscles and movements when doing activities of daily living in your third trimester. For example, lifting and carrying things, vacuuming,

cleaning. Think of **warrior pose when vacuuming**, squats when lifting and picking things up, wrist position when holding frying pan etc.

- you can still do arm exercises like: **upright row, shoulder raises, wall presses and band pulling**
- you can still do full **squat** routine, but maybe one squat type per session and just do a few
- **clams or oyster exercises with belly support** for outer bum muscles are still good to do, as long as you stretch these muscles afterwards. You can **stretch your bum muscles in sitting**.
- you will have to place a folded towel under your bump to support it when you are on your side doing exercise, and you should go onto all fours to change sides rather than roll over from the top
- maintain cardio fitness with walking, cross trainer, stair climbing, gentle hill walking and swimming
- continue Kegel exercises
- At about 36 weeks, start to massage perineum and learn to relax and open that area
- **sitting on a fitball** do figure of eights with your bum and hips, forwards backwards, side to side and circles. This is a safe way to maintain gentle core strength and fun for the baby! Sitting on a fitball as of 35 weeks is better for the baby and your pelvis as it allows for movement and helps the baby to “descend” into the pelvis.
- lots of walking and house work will be enough exercise for the last weeks of pregnancy, and can help to descend the baby into the pelvis in preparation for birth!

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