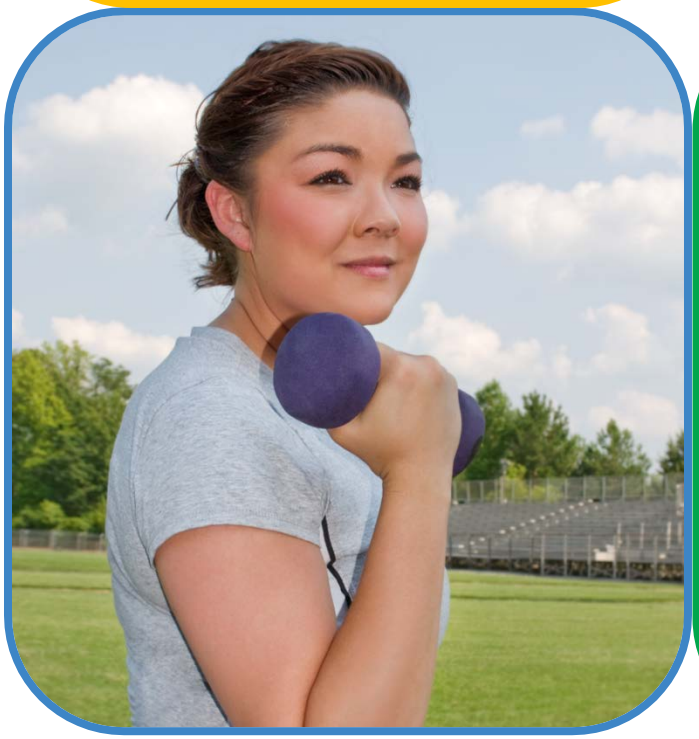
Benefits of Exercise

If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.
Ask about the activities that are right for you.

Exercise can help you…

- look and feel great
- have more energy
- be more fit and flexible
- have firmer muscles
- lower your stress
- have stronger bones
- manage your weight
- have a stronger heart
- lower your blood pressure
- lower your cholesterol



In pregnancy, exercise has extra benefits. It can help…

- you feel less tired
- you sleep better
- improve your mood
- improve your posture and reduce back pain
- reduce constipation
- reduce bloating and swelling
- make your muscles stronger for labor
- prevent or treat diabetes

Photo credit for photo of female running: Amanda Mills, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Get Active!

Key Words

- **Moderate aerobic exercise** makes your heart beat faster.
- **Vigorous aerobic exercise** makes you sweat and breathe faster.

The talk test: If you are vigorously active, you should not be able to talk comfortably and exercise at the same time.

Goals

- Aim for at least 1 hour of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise every day. You can split the hour into sessions that are at least 10 minutes each. If you can't do 1 hour, do what you can. A little more exercise can make a big difference.
- Try to do vigorous aerobic activity at least 3 days per week. If you're not active right now, start with only 1 day per week and slowly increase to 3 days per week.
- Do muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 3 days per week to stay strong.
- Most pregnant teens should exercise 30 minutes or more on most if not all days of the week. Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program. Ask about the activities that are right for you.

Examples of Vigorous Aerobic Exercises:

- Running or jogging with friends, family, or pets (if pregnant, usually okay if you ran before pregnancy, but ask your doctor first)
- Fast dancing or swimming
- Playing soccer, tag, basketball, or tennis (do not do if pregnant)

Examples of Moderate Aerobic Exercises:

- Walking briskly. Try walking with children or walking to school/work.
- Biking, climbing stairs, or dancing
- Raking leaves, sweeping, vacuuming or scrubbing floors, mowing the lawn

Examples of Easy Bone and Muscle-Strengthening Exercises:

Walking, lifting weights or children, climbing stairs

Photo credit for photo of female running: Amanda Mills, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Body Basics

Check out which activities work specific muscles of your body!

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Exercises for Everyone *Good for Pregnancy*	Muscles Worked
Running (if pregnant, usually okay if you ran before pregnancy, but ask your doctor first)	Calves (lower leg), front/back thigh
Swimming	Nearly all major muscles
Walking	Arms, calves, front/back thigh, abdominals
Cycling on a stationary bike	Calves, front/back thigh
Dancing	Nearly all major muscles but varies by type of dance
Push-ups	Chest, shoulders, arms, abdominals
Squats -- See the *Fitness Tip*	Calves, front/back thigh, butt
Crunches (if pregnant, avoid after 1st trimester)	Abdominals

More Exercises *Do not do if Pregnant*	Muscles Worked
Jumping rope	Calves, thighs, abdominals, shoulders, arms
Skating	Inner/outer thigh, butt
Jumping Jacks	Calves, inner/outer thigh, butt

Adapted from the Office on Women's Health <www.girlshealth.gov/fitness/exercise/musclegroups.cfm>

Fitness Tip: How to do a Squat

1. In front of a sturdy, armless chair, stand with feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms out so they are parallel to the ground and lean forward a little at the hips.
2. Lower yourself in a slow, controlled motion, to a count of four, until you are almost sitting. Do not sit down too quickly.
   - Make sure your knees **never** come forward past your toes.
   - Place more of your weight on your heels than on the balls or toes of your feet to help keep your knees from moving forward past your toes.
3. Pause, count to two. Slowly stand up. Keep your knees over your ankles and your back straight. Repeat.
   - Do not lean your weight too far forward or onto your toes when standing.

Note: If this exercise is too hard, start off by using your hands for help. If you are unable to go all the way down, put a few pillows on the chair.

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/growingstronger/exercises/stage1.html>

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How to Make a Home Gym

If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.
Ask about the activities that are right for you.

Get jumping!

- Jump rope for 30 seconds, rest, and repeat.
- Put the jump rope on the floor and jump from side to side for 20 seconds. Then rest and repeat. Do not do if pregnant.

Grab a towel

Grab the ends of a towel and raise it from behind your head to over your head. Do it 10 times, then rest, and repeat.

"Ab twist" with a ball (any size)

Sit on the floor with legs bent, feet shoulder-width apart, and toes pointing up so that you are resting on your heels. Hold the ball with both hands and extend your arms out in front of you. Twist your waist from side to side. Do 10 on each side, rest, and repeat.

Playground gym

- If you live near a park or take care of kids, use the jungle gym as a chin up bar! Do as many chin ups as you can.
- You can also hang and raise your legs, keeping them straight. Do this 10 times, rest, and repeat.

Home-made dumbbells

Use water bottles or milk jugs filled with dirt or sand, or canned food as dumbbells/weights:

- **Do bicep (upper arm) curls.** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Hold weights straight down at your sides, palms facing forward. Slowly bend your elbows and lift weights toward chest. Keep elbows at your sides. Hold the position for 1 second. Slowly lower your arms. Repeat 10-15 times. Rest, then repeat 10-15 more times.
- **Do front arm raises.** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold weights straight down at your sides, with palms facing backward. Keeping them straight, raise both arms in front of you to shoulder height. Hold the position for 1 second. Slowly lower your arms. Repeat 10-15 times. Rest, then repeat 10-15 more times.
- **Do side arm raises.** You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Hold hand weights straight down at your sides with palms facing inward. Raise both arms to the side, shoulder height. Hold the position for 1 second. Slowly lower your arms. Repeat 10-15 times. Rest, then repeat 10-15 more times.

Adapted from Health Net of California's Fit Families for Life Program, 2009 and Go4Life from the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health

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Fitness Tips for Teens

If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program. Ask about the activities that are right for you. See *Safety Tips* on the next page for more information.

Exercise –it is a way of life

- If you are not regularly active, start gradually. Walk a little more or lift light weights. Increase the amount of weights when you are ready.
- Choose activities that YOU like. Maybe you would like to dance at home. Walk briskly while you window-shop or while chatting with your best friend.
- Find out when you like to exercise. Are you a morning or an evening person? If you are busy, break up your exercise into 10-minute sessions throughout the day.
- Spare your coffee money and try exercising to stay awake! Exercise can give you the energy-boost that you need.
- Team up with friends so you can motivate each other. Or, join a group activity and make new friends while exercising!
- Map your walking or running route. Choose a safe route that is well-lit and does not have missing sidewalks. Use a city map or create a map online at www.mapmyrun.com/search.
- If you enjoy Wii Fitness®, use that to get moving. If you have a smart phone, use apps to help you exercise and stay on track with goals. If you are pregnant, make sure the activities you choose are safe for your pregnancy. Talk to your doctor and read the safety tips on the next page.

Just MOVE –every day, anytime and anywhere!

- Walk to places that are close by. Park your car or get off the bus farther away from you are going.
- Do chores that get you moving — walk the dog, mow the lawn, vacuum, pull weeds, or wash the car.
- Use any chance to get up and move around. Every little bit makes a difference! Here are some ideas:
  - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
  - Walk or ride a bike to school.
  - Be active in physical education (P.E.) class.
  - Stretch or run in place while watching TV.
- Remember that all physical activity is good for you—sports, planned exercise, household chores, even yard work.

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Make it a family affair—exercise with your family!

- If you take care of younger children, don't just watch them play tag or kick a ball. Join them! You can also push swings or climb on the jungle gym.
- Take young children on a walk in the stroller. Not only does this exercise your whole body, it can help put children to sleep!
- Help your family stay healthy. Exercise with parents, grandparents, and children to help prevent heart disease or type 2 diabetes. They will be happy when you are healthy. Try dancing to music or walking with your family.

Get toned by building muscles

- When you work your muscles, they burn calories even when you are not working out! Working your muscles can also help you look more fit and toned. You can carry things more easily.
- You can do muscle-strengthening activities while listening to music or even in front of the TV! Try lifting weights or water bottles or do some crunches.

No gym? No problem!

- You do not need a fitness center or have to do high-intensity workouts. Making small changes, like walking more, is just as effective. And all you need is a pair of shoes!
- You can make a cheap gym right at home. Ask your case manager for the handout, *How to Make a Home Gym.*

Safety Tips

- Warm up and stretch before you exercise.
- Wear athletic shoes that are for walking or running.
- Wear bright clothing when it's dark.
- Use sunscreen. Drink enough water.
- To avoid overheating, do not exercise in hot, humid weather or when you have a fever.
- Wear a helmet and padding if skating or biking. Pregnant teens should not skate or bike.
- Talk to your doctor if you feel light-headed, your chest hurts, or if you have nausea, severe muscle pain, or joint pain as these could be signs of something wrong.
- If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program. After doing so, remember:
  - Do not scuba dive, ski, or play contact sports such as soccer, basketball and hockey. These activities can be harmful for your pregnancy.
  - Do not do jumping activities. Avoid quick motions that could strain your joints.
  - Do not do activities with a high risk of falling, such as gymnastics or horseback-riding.
  - After the first trimester, avoid exercises that require lying down on your back.

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How Active Am I?

Check off your time spent on the activities listed. If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program. Ask about the activities that are right for you.

Activity	1-2 x month	1-2 x week	3-4 x week	Every day
Sedentary (not moving)				
Watching television				
Video games or computer time				
Reading books/magazines				
Going to the movies				
Talking on the phone, texting or using the internet				
Taking a nap				
Active (for everyone—good for pregnancy)				
Walking				
Dancing				
Swimming				
Throwing a Frisbee				
Stretching or prenatal yoga				
Table tennis				
Lifting weights (dumbbells, canned soup, water bottles				
Yard work (weeding, mowing, raking)				
Housework (dusting, sweeping, vacuuming, mopping, washing windows)				
Cycling on a stationary bike				
Using apps or electronics for physical activity, such as Wii® (if pregnant, this depends on the activity, so ask your doctor about the activity first)				
Jogging or running (usually okay if you ran before you were pregnant, but ask your doctor first)				
Active (do not do if pregnant)				
Skating, skiing or skateboarding				
Jumping rope				
Riding a bike				
Team sports (for example, bowling, basketball, baseball, softball, soccer, football, volleyball)				

Try to have more active and fewer sedentary activities each day. Now complete *My Action Plan for Exercise* to achieve this goal!

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My Action Plan for Exercise

If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program, in case you have a health condition that limits your activity. Ask about what activities are right for you.

I plan to spend less time on sedentary activities that require little or no energy:

Activity (example: watching TV)	Time spent now? (per week or day)	How often will I do it? (per week or day)

I plan to spend more time on these active activities:

Activity (example: walking)	Time spent now? (per week or day)	How often will I do it? (per week or day)

I plan to add the following active activities:

New activity (example: dancing)	How often will I do it? (per week or day)

Exercise Tips

- ✓ Get your girlfriend, boyfriend, friends, or family involved! Everyone will be healthier. You can help each other stay on track. You will have more fun!
- ✓ Get a calendar (or make one) and mark off each day that you met your goal. Free calendars are available for download at www.printablecalendar.ca.

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