



HOW EXERCISE CAN HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR DIABETES

Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) occurs as a result of hormonal changes during pregnancy. This causes insulin resistance resulting in high blood glucose levels. If blood glucose levels become too high there can be health risks to both the mother and baby.

Exercise and blood glucose levels

Exercise has been shown to be beneficial for most women during pregnancy. For women with Gestational Diabetes, exercise has a positive effect on blood glucose levels, and can reduce the need for insulin during pregnancy.

Exercise can help lower blood sugar levels and helps to keep them more stable for up to 72 hours after exercise.

Exercise and a healthy diet can reduce the need for insulin during pregnancy.

Beginning an exercise programme

Choose low impact exercise such as walking, swimming or cycling on a stationary bike.

Aim to exercise for a total of thirty minutes every day (this can be broken into 3 x 10min slots if easier).

Include 2-3 sessions of muscle strengthening sessions each week.

We have included a home exercise programme on the following page to help guide you.

Exercise intensity

Aim to exercise at a moderate, somewhat hard level so you are puffing a little, become a little bit sweaty but can still talk in full sentences.

Stay motivated

Start gradually – your body will adjust and get stronger steadily.

Have fun! Choose activities you enjoy and vary the type of activity, or exercise with a friend.

Things to avoid

- Don't lie flat on your back to exercise after the first trimester.
- Avoid repetitive high impact activities like jumping.
- Avoid contact and high-risk sports such as netball, skiing, and horse riding.
- Don't allow yourself to become overheated or dehydrated – drink water before, during and after exercise and avoid exercising in hot conditions.

Stop exercising if any of the following happen:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Excessive pain
- Nausea or vomiting (especially if you can't keep food down)
- Decreased movement of your baby.

Please go to the Women's Emergency Care or your nearest hospital emergency department.

If you have been advised not to exercise during pregnancy, consult your doctor or physiotherapist before commencing an exercise programme.

For more information

Royal Women's Hospital

Physiotherapy Department

T: (03) 8345 3160

Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm

Better Health Channel

W: www.betterhealth.org.au

National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS)

W: www.ndss.com.au/physical-activity

Diabetes Australia

W: www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

Diabetes Victoria

W: www.diabetesvic.org.au

Home exercise programme – as demonstrated in Physiotherapy Classes

Cardiovascular Exercise: Aim for 30 minutes per day

Choose low impact exercise such as walking, swimming or cycling on a stationary bike.

If it is easier to exercise indoors, then try marching on the spot and add:

- Arm swings – forward, sideways and backwards
- Leg variations – heel taps forwards, side taps, toe taps backwards

Strength Exercises: Complete every 2-3 days

Leg Exercise	Squats x 10 Do squats as if sitting on a small chair
	Calf raises x 15-20 Stand tall, knees straight, lift up onto toes Use support for balance as required
	Clam x 10 Lie on your side with knees bent, hips facing forward Slowly lift/lower top knee keeping ankles together (ensure hips don't roll back)
Arm Exercises	Complete exercises in an upright sitting posture, shoulders gently rolled back Use hand weights up to 2kg, one weight in each hand
	Bicep Curls x 10 Hold arms straight down by your side, palms facing forward Lift and lower weight by bending and straightening your elbow
	Shoulder Exercises x 10 Hold arms in bent elbow position with elbows tucked in by your side Slowly punch each arm forward and return, alternate right and left sides Slowly punch each arm upwards and return, alternate right and left sides
	Triceps Exercises x 15 Slightly lean chest forward Hold arms in bent elbow position with elbows tucked in by your side Draw your elbows back by squeezing your shoulders together Hold shoulders still and slowly straighten then bend your elbows
Pelvic Floor Exercises**	Do 10 x 10 second holds (start at 5 second hold if unable to hold for 10 seconds)
	Do 15-20 quick lifts in a row with no hold
	Repeat 3 sets of each per day
Deep Abdominal Muscles**	Start in sitting, then progress to being on hands and knees x 10-15. Gently draw in lower abdominal muscles, hold 5 seconds, release Progress exercise by adding an arm lift while drawing abdominal muscles in
Stretch	Finish your session with x 6 deep breaths in/out and some gentle stretches

** See the *Pelvic Floor Exercises* and *Improving your recovery after birth* fact sheets for details of these exercises.

DISCLAIMER This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your baby or your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you or your baby require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department. © The Royal Women's Hospital 2020