

Pregnancy Exercises: Flexibility and Relaxation

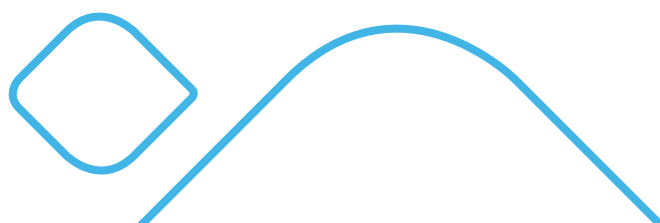
Benefits of exercising during pregnancy

- ❖ Reduces pregnancy related pain and physical discomfort
- ❖ Improves sleep and sense of well-being
- ❖ Lowers the risk of developing gestational diabetes
- ❖ Improves cardiovascular function and reduces blood pressure
- ❖ Reduces bone density loss

Things to remember

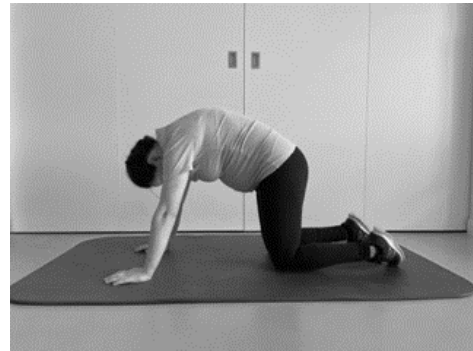
- ❖ Listen to your body and do exercises that feel good
- ❖ Modify or stop the exercises if you experience discomfort or pain
- ❖ Contact your physiotherapist if you have any concerns about your exercise programme
- ❖ Keep hydrated and eat a healthy, balanced diet

These exercises are to be done with the guidance of your physiotherapist.



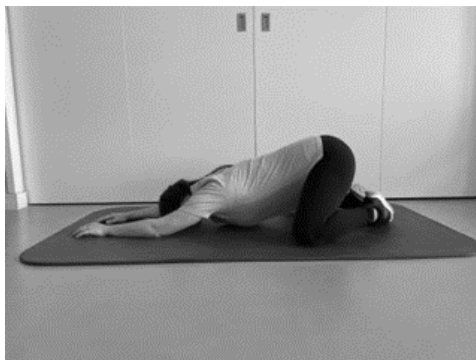
1. Cat/cows

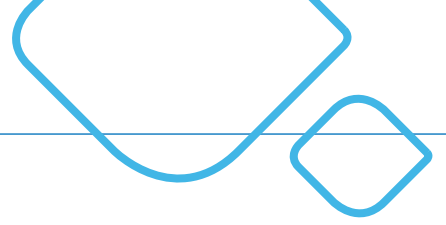
- Start on your hands and knees, with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
- Pull your belly button in towards your spine and round the spine upwards whilst tucking your chin in.
- Slowly return to a flat back position.
- Repeat up to 10 times.
See [here](#) for a video



2. Child's pose with/without gym ball

- Start on your hands and knees, with your knees open as far as feels comfortable.
- Slowly sit back on to your heels, allowing your bump to come forward and crawl your hands out in front of you.
- You may also crawl your hands to the left and to the right to stretch the muscles that run down the sides of your back.
- Towards the end of your pregnancy, it might be difficult to fully stretch your back due to lack of space for your bump or you may have pain higher up in your back. In this instance, place your hands on a gym ball and roll the ball away from you and/or to the sides.
- Take 5 slow deep breaths in this relaxing position.





3. Pelvic tilts on ball

- Sit comfortably on a gym ball with both feet planted on the floor.
- Tilt your pelvis by pulling your belly button towards your spine and tucking your tail bone under.
- Then release and arch your lower back by pushing your tail bone out.
- Additionally, you may also try tilting your pelvic from side to side or in a figure of 8.
- Repeat up to 10 times.
See [here](#) for video



4. Upper back stretch

- In sitting, reach one hand above your head and lean to the side. Hold this position and take 3 deep breaths. Repeat right and left.
- With your arms crossed, turn to look over your right shoulder. Hold this position and take 3 deep breaths. Repeat on the left.



5. Forward lean on table, stretch from side to side

- Face a surface that's level to your hip height and stand an arm's length away.
- Stretch your arms forward, holding on to the surface, and allow your bump to drop down.
- Keep a gentle bend in your knees.
- Push your bottom backwards, tuck your tail bone down and enjoy the nice stretch in your back as you take some deep breaths.
- Move your hips freely and explore positions that feel good to you and your body while the weight of your bump is offloaded.



6. Seated piriformis stretch

- Sit comfortably on a steady chair. Place your left foot on the right knee and allow the left knee to drop.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s, allowing the buttock to stretch, before switching to the opposite leg. To increase the stretch, bring your torso forwards.
- Repeat up to 5 times.
- This stretch can also be completed on the floor.





7. Hip flexor stretch

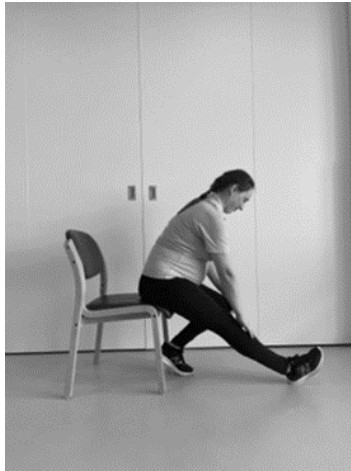
- Start by placing one foot a stride in front of the other. Bend the front knee whilst keeping the back knee as straight as possible. You can hold a chair for balance.
- Once balanced, push your hips forward and lean your torso back.
- The stretch should be felt at the front of the back leg.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s before switching legs. Repeat on both sides.



8. Seated hamstring/standing hamstring

a. Sitting

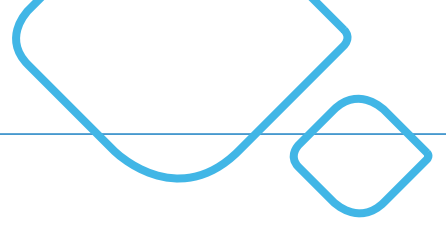
- Sit comfortably on a steady chair with both legs bent. Straighten your left leg out in front of you with the heel remaining on the floor.
- Slowly lean forward, sliding your hand down your left leg, until you feel a stretch in the back of your upper leg.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s before switching legs.



b. Standing

- Start with both legs together. Straighten your left leg out in front of you with the heel remaining on the floor whilst allowing the right knee to bend slightly. Lean into the stretch, by pushing your buttocks back, until you feel a stretch in the back of your upper leg.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s before switching legs.





9. Calf stretch

a. Gastrocnemius stretch

- Start by placing one foot in front of the other, holding on to a chair or wall for support. **Bend the front knee whilst keeping the back knee as straight as possible**, ensuring that the heel of the back foot remains flat on the floor.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s before switching legs.



b. Soleus stretch

- Start by placing one foot in front of the other, holding on to a chair or wall for support. **Bend the front and the back knee**, ensuring that the heel of the back foot remains flat on the floor.
- Take some slow, deep breaths and hold for 30s before switching legs. Repeat up to 5 times.



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Date of publication: October 2024 | Ref: RUH PHY/085
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