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Human Biology
Research Paper

Pregnancy and Exercise

An activity requiring physical effort, to sustain or improve health and fitness can only be known as something we are taught to do everyday; exercise. Exercise is important to do everyday, but what happens if you are pregnant? Is it still something you should be doing? Exercising while being pregnant is not only safe, but it is highly recommended by doctors and other medical professional's. This is because it helps a women build stamina for labor and delivery, makes a healthier baby, reduces pregnancy discomfort, and helps speeds up postpartum recovery.

Having an easier delivery is a wish made by any pregnant women preparing for labor. If more women knew that exercise can increase your chances of having an easier pregnancy, I think more would want to do it. Some studies suggest that the fitness level of the mother can result in a shorter labor, fewer medical interventions, and less exhaustion during labor. Strong abs and a fit cardiovascular system can help you give a better push, and have a stronger stamina for the pushing stage (Scholsberg). To build up strength and endurance you can do exercises such as walking, swimming, yoga and Pilates. These exercises will help keep your energy levels high and increase your flexibility. A lot of woman seeking to find safe exercise programs during pregnancy will enroll in Prenatal program that helps direct them to what program will work best for there activity level. "Pregnant women who stay in shape tend to have shorter labors" says Tekoa King, who is a certified nurse-midwife and an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California at San Francisco. "Fitness improves endurance, and if you're better able to tolerate labor, you're less likely to end up needing medical intervention" (Crow).

When someone is going through labor when pregnant they are hoping to find that the baby will arrive healthy and strong. Some women are afraid if they do exercise before their pregnancy it will lead to miscarriages or a preterm labor. In fact studies have shown that more sedentary mothers run a greater risk for these things to happen than their moderately exercising counterparts. It also has a very high positive effect on the babies' fetal nervous system development. This effect has shown the babies have healthier hearts than other infants a full month after delivery. Many women who have a high BMI or are severely overweight, have issues trying to conceive. It is much harder to become pregnant when you are overweight, and is also more difficult to have a healthy baby when you are overweight. A biostatistician from Kaiser Permanente Southern California department named Mary Helen Black said, "I think parents all want to give their babies the best start in life possible. Women who are thinking about starting a family should really consult with their health care provider to find out if they're in a healthy body weight range." (Pearson) Exercising for someone who wants to conceive or lose weight for a healthier baby is always a good solution. Exercise makes for a healthier baby, and a healthier mother.

When a woman is pregnant, there are many discomforts that come along with it. Some common discomforts are backaches, hip and leg pains. There are exercises that will help reduce all these discomforts and make for a more comfortable and happy pregnancy. During the second trimester excess weight starts to take a toll on the body. The weight puts pressure on the body that it is not used to and puts pressure on the joints and ligaments. During this time is when most people start to experience pain in different areas. As the pregnancy continues the aches and pains will only increase. You can reduce these pains by healthy exercise tips by doctors and experts. The number one most painful area in woman is the back. This is because as a baby grows, a woman's

uterus will grow as much as 1,000 times its original size. Activities and exercises such as swimming, water aerobics, prenatal yoga, and other types of low-impact routines will help to alleviate back and other pains. In the back it not only helps reduce pain, but it helps the body get proper back alignment as the baby continues to grow. Prenatal Yoga is also recommended by many doctors to help stabilize the joints in your body and provide relief. It especially helps hip pain. Hip pain is hard to find relief for because it can occur while walking and walking only makes it worse. Prenatal Yoga or swimming though helps the body strengthen and relax the hip without straining it. Strengthening the abdominal muscles, back muscles, pelvic floor, buttock and thigh muscles can effectively help decrease back pain. Some of these strengthening exercises are Pelvic Tilts, and Wall Squats. It is recommended to do these strengthening exercises in a slow and controlled manner. The strengthening poses should be held about 3 to seconds and repeated 10 to 30 times. Stretching along with strengthening is also a form of exercise and helps reduce discomfort also. There are stretches such as the back, neck, and chest stretch. During the stretches you should hold the stretch for 20 to 30 seconds each, and repeat them 3 times. Cardiovascular, strengthening, and stretching exercises all help reduce pregnancy discomfort. (Klein)

4th Speeds up Postpartum recovery

After giving birth it is normal for a mother to have gained about 10-15 pounds average on pregnancy. However it is very easy to gain much more than this due to cravings, and immobility when pregnant. We are taught and know that the way to lose weight is to eat right and exercise. Exercise again plays a role in pregnancy by helping a mother get back to her normal self and weight. Some women are unable to walk for very long a few weeks after delivery. There are still exercise's they can do such as, abs and Kegel sets. Kegel is a common known pelvic floor

exercise. It consists of repeatedly contracting and relaxing the muscles that form part of the pelvic floor known as the “Kegel muscles”. This form of exercise helps to reduce urinary incontinence, reduce urinary incontinence, and reduce premature ejaculatory occurrences in men. (Wikipedia) After pregnancy another issue rises on woman and there weight gain; the thyroid. The thyroid acts and responds differently during pregnancy, and after delivery it is trying to return to normal. It can take from one month to six months post-partum for it to regulate itself. If the thyroid is having difficulty turning back to normal, your body’s metabolism will slow down. It can lead to a condition called hypothyroidism that can lead to weight gain and lethargy (Borden). Another issue that can occur and affect a mother’s weight gain is Post-Partum Depression. It can harper your mood, and motivation. There are so many things that can occur during pregnancy that can affect the weight of an individual. Running has become very popular in the last few years, and is one of the best cardiovascular calorie burners out there. With a doctors okay it is possible to begin running shortly after pregnancy. If a mother were to do the preventative exercises you’re body will be more prepared to handle demands of vigorous cardio and weight bearing exercises after delivery (MomBod Fitness).

As the examples above have shown exercise is so important to a healthy pregnancy and a healthier mother. So many women chose not to exercise during pregnancy, but if more did we would have a healthier generation, and have less women stressing over post partum recovery. Exercising while being pregnant is not only safe, but it is highly recommended by doctors and other medical professional’s. This is because it helps a women build stamina for labor and delivery, makes a healthier baby, reduces pregnancy discomfort, and helps speeds up postpartum recovery. Now if you or anybody ever you know asks the question can I exercise while I am pregnant? Respond with a big, YES!

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