

# Staying Active During Pregnancy

While pregnant, be active to strengthen your muscles, cope with aches and pains, and get your body ready for childbirth.

## Exercising during pregnancy can:

- Lessen back pain, constipation, bloating, and swelling.
- Prevent, or help treat, gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy).
- Boost your energy, mood, and blood flow.
- Help you sleep better.
- Help your body get ready for labor.
- Help you body recover after delivery.

## At your prenatal visit, talk to your doctor about exercising. Stay active with:

- **Walking each day.** Walking is gentle on your body. Start slow. Stretch before each walk.
- **Biking** on a stationary bike. A stationary bike lowers your risk of falling as your belly grows and your balance shifts.
- **Yoga** to ease back pain and pressure on your body. Avoid lying flat on your back or stomach. Try not to overstretch.
- **Dance or Zumba** which can be done in your home or at a gym. Avoid spinning and jumping.

**It is best for pregnant people to exercise for at least 150 minutes per week.** You can exercise for 30 minutes for 5 days a week. You can also do shorter 10-15 minute workouts twice a day. Wear supportive sneakers and drink lots of water.

**Avoid high-impact exercise** like contact sports, fast changes in direction, or exercising to the point of exhaustion.

**Stop exercising** if you have vaginal bleeding or leaking, dizziness, chest pain, shortness of breath, contractions, or less fetal movement.

**If you take a gym class,** tell the teacher you are pregnant before the class starts.

**If you feel too sick to work out during your first trimester,** don't push yourself. The sickness will pass and you will get time for fitness.



Turn over



During your pregnancy, try these exercises. You can do these exercises one after another or one at a time throughout your day. Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise.

## First Trimester Exercises

These exercises will help strengthen your muscles and get your body ready to carry more weight. If you have morning sickness, moving will often help you feel better.

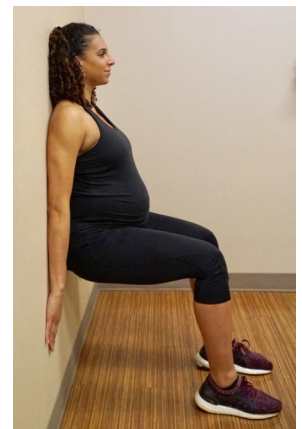
### Donkey Kicks strengthen your butt and legs.

1. Get into a table top position on your hands and knees. Have your wrists be directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Keep your knees bent and squeeze your stomach. Lift one leg up behind you so that the bottom of your foot is facing the ceiling.
3. Lower back down. Repeat 20 times on each side.



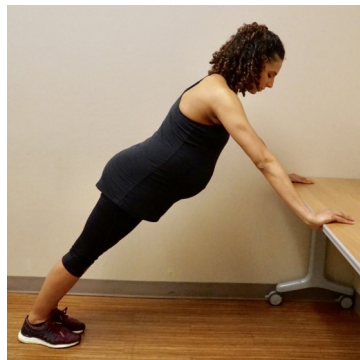
### Wall Sits strengthen your thighs and stomach.

1. Stand against a wall with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Take a large step forward, keeping your upper back on the wall.
3. Slide down the wall by bending your knees into a 90 degree angle. Make sure your knees do not go past your toes.
4. Hold for 60 seconds and repeat for an extra burn.



### Supported Push-Ups strengthen your chest, arms, and lower back.

1. Place both hands shoulder-width apart on the edge of a sturdy table.
2. Take a few steps back so that your body is in a straight diagonal line like a plank.
3. With your shoulders over your wrists, bend your elbows and lower your body down slowly.
4. Push off of the table until your arms are straight again.
5. Repeat 10 times.



# Second Trimester Exercises

These exercises will help you control your muscles, ease lower back pain, boost your energy, and maintain your balance.

**Lunges** strengthen your legs and help with hip flexibility.

1. Stand tall.
2. Extend your right leg back behind you.
3. Lower down into a lunge by bending your legs into a 90 degree angle.
4. Bend and straighten your legs 10 times.
5. Repeat on other side.



**Standing Leg Lifts** help strengthen your legs and butt. They also help with hip flexibility and balance.

1. Stand tall and hold the back of a chair for support.
2. Lift your leg straight out to the side as high as you can.
3. Slowly lower it down, but don't let it touch the floor.
4. Repeat 15 times on each leg.



**Crossover Reaches** help with balance and strengthen the muscles in your belly.

1. Get into a table top position on your hands and knees. Have your wrists be directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Squeeze your stomach muscles.
3. Reach your right arm out in front of you while you kick your left leg straight out behind you until they are in line with your back.
4. Hold for one breath. Lower back down.
5. Repeat with your opposite arm and leg 10 times on each side.



Turn over

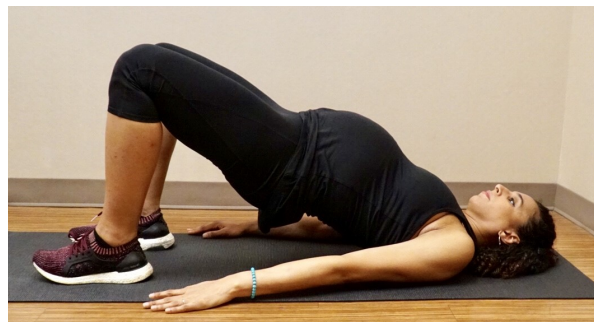




# Second Trimester Exercises

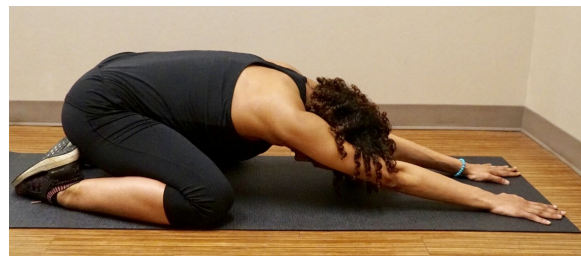
**Bridges** strengthen your butt muscles and hamstrings (back of your thighs).

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
2. Squeeze your butt. Press your feet and arms into the floor. Lift your hips towards the ceiling. Keep your back straight.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. Slowly lower your butt back to the floor.
5. Repeat 15 times. For an extra burn do this exercise with one leg lifted off of the ground.



**Supported Back Stretch** helps with lower back pain.

1. Start on your hands and knees. Spread your knees and then sit back on your heels.
2. Bend forward. Reach your arms in front of you to rest your hands on the floor or a chair straight out in front of you.
3. Hold for 20 seconds and let your body relax.

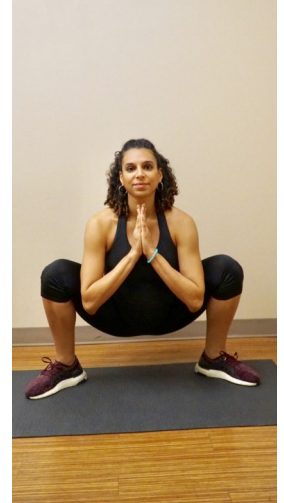


# Third Trimester Exercises

These exercises will help your body get ready for childbirth. They will help you control your muscles, and improve hip and pelvic flexibility.

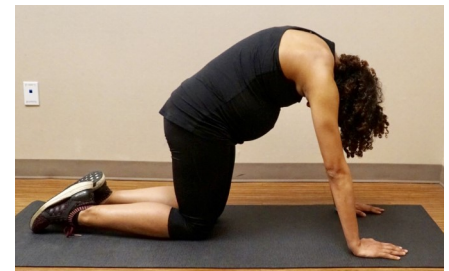
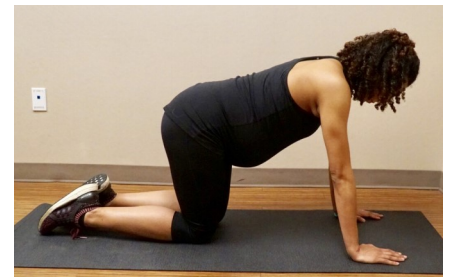
## Squats open your birth canal for childbirth.

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Toes and knees should point slightly outward.
2. Keep your back straight and heels on the floor. Slowly bend your knees and lower your butt toward the floor. Keep your knees in line with your feet.
3. Hold for 20 seconds. You can rest your elbows on your knees. For extra support, try this exercise with your back against a wall.
4. Repeat 10 times.



## Pelvic Tilts help with back pain during pregnancy and labor.

1. Get into a table top position on your hands and knees. Have your wrists be directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Bring your belly button in and your chin to your chest. Round your back up toward the ceiling.
3. Stay in this position for 7 seconds.
4. Relax back to table top position.
5. Repeat 10 times.



## Kegels strengthen your pelvic muscles, help with bladder control, and prevent hemorrhoids. You can also do this after pregnancy to help with vaginal healing.

1. To do this exercise, pretend you are peeing and then stop by squeezing your pelvic muscles.
2. Squeeze your pelvic muscles for 5 seconds.
3. Rest for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat 20 times a day. Do them anywhere.

Turn over



# Third Trimester Exercises

**Butterflies** open your pelvis and stretch your lower back.

1. Sit on the floor. Bring the bottom of your feet to touch so that your legs are close together.
2. Gently push down on your thighs with your elbows until you feel a stretch in your legs.
3. For extra support, try this exercise with your back against a wall.
4. Hold this position for 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



**Figure Four** stretches your butt muscles, which are sensitive to the changes in your hips during pregnancy.

1. Stand facing a high chair or stool. Place your left ankle on the seat of the chair. Your knee should be bent and pointing outwards.
2. Lean forward until you feel a stretch in your left butt cheek.
3. Hold for 20 seconds.
4. This exercise can also be done while seated in a chair by placing your left ankle on your right knee.
5. Repeat on other side.



For questions about wellness or to take a free exercise class with CHN, contact 212.432.8494 or [wellness@chnnyc.org](mailto:wellness@chnnyc.org)