

## Benefits and Considerations of Maternal Exercise in Nurturing Health

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### DESCRIPTION

Pregnancy is a transformative journey that brings about physical and emotional changes in a woman's life. During this time, maintaining a healthy lifestyle becomes crucial for both the mother and the developing baby. Regular exercise is often recommended as part of a well-rounded prenatal care routine.

#### Benefits of maternal exercise

Engaging in regular exercise during pregnancy can offer numerous benefits for both the mother and the baby. Some of them are:

**Improved physical health:** Regular exercise helps pregnant women maintain a healthy weight, manage gestational diabetes, and reduce the risk of developing conditions like preeclampsia. It also promotes cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles, and enhances overall stamina and flexibility.

**Boosted mood and mental well-being:** Pregnancy can bring about mood swings and heightened emotional stress. Exercise releases endorphins, known as feel-good hormones, which can improve mood, reduce anxiety and depression, and enhance overall mental well-being.

**Increased energy levels:** As the body undergoes changes during pregnancy, fatigue can become a common complaint. Regular physical activity helps combat pregnancy-related fatigue by increasing energy levels and promoting better sleep patterns.

**Enhanced posture and body awareness:** Pregnancy alters the body's center of gravity, leading to changes in posture and balance. Exercise, especially those focusing on core strength and stability, can help improve posture and body awareness, reducing the risk of back pain and postural imbalances.

**Preparation for labor and delivery:** Regular exercise during pregnancy can help prepare the body for labor and delivery. Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles through exercises like

Kegels can improve muscle tone and control, potentially leading to an easier and smoother delivery process.

#### Considerations for maternal exercise

While exercise is generally beneficial during pregnancy, certain considerations should be taken into account to ensure safety and effectiveness.

**Consultation with healthcare provider:** It is essential for pregnant women to consult with their healthcare provider before starting or continuing an exercise routine. They can assess individual health status, any potential risks or complications, and provide tailored guidance and recommendations.

**Exercise modifications:** As pregnancy progresses, certain modifications may be necessary to accommodate the changing body. Low-impact exercises, such as walking, swimming, or prenatal yoga, are generally recommended. Avoiding high-impact activities or those with a risk of falls or abdominal trauma is crucial.

**Listening to the body:** Each pregnancy is unique, and it's important to listen to the body's signals. If exercise causes dizziness, shortness of breath, pain, or contractions, it's crucial to stop immediately and seek medical advice.

**Hydration and temperature regulation:** Staying hydrated is vital during pregnancy, particularly during exercise. Pregnant women should drink plenty of water before, during, and after workouts. It's also important to exercise in a well-ventilated environment, wear breathable clothing, and avoid overheating.

**Nutrition:** Exercise should be complemented by a well-balanced diet that meets the increased nutritional needs during pregnancy. Adequate intake of calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals is essential to support maternal and fetal health.

**Pelvic floor exercises:** Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles through exercises like Kegels is important during pregnancy. These exercises can help prevent urinary incontinence, support the growing uterus, and promote postpartum recovery.

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