

## 1ST TRIMESTER

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Your body is busy creating life and multiplying cells in your womb. The placenta is developing, and your hormones are all over the place. You may also be experiencing morning sickness. The best thing to do is focus on good nutrition and healthy snacking. Eating and drinking can help with morning sickness and will keep your energy up for the major work happening inside your body. Try eating when you feel nauseous, this is esp. true if you are exercising. Getting to grips now with the right foods, drinks and supplements should be a priority. Supplements like folic acid, vitamin D, DHA essential fatty acids and other pregnancy specific vitamins are recommended by the NHS to support the development of your baby. Eating lots of greens, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates will also help you acquire these nutrients. Keeping snacks handy will be important for a pregnant lady. Some examples are: apple, cheese and crackers and almonds and raisins. Good hydration drinks are Ribena and water, coconut water, or organic sports drinks. Speak to a nutritionist for more information.

### EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

The advice from GP's and midwives is to continue your normal fitness regimes for as long as you feel comfortable doing so. They also advise avoiding taking up a new activity or sport, and to modify risky sports like rock climbing, diving, road biking, skiing, surfing and contact sports like rugby. You obviously want to avoid falls, lead falls as a climber, and contact collisions. This will highly increase your risk of miscarriage.

Keeping fit and strong pre pregnancy is a really good idea. Because you will be giving up some exercise, the fitter you are going into pregnancy the better. But as previously mentioned, do not try to take up running or a sport because you want to make up for lost time. Speak to a physiotherapist or fitness professional who has an interest in pre and post natal exercise if you are unsure about anything. Doing safe aerobic and strength exercises are very beneficial during pregnancy, but should also be tailored for you.

### REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

- maintain current fitness levels and strength of core, upper and lower body
- do start Pilates, core, yoga and fitness classes that are within your limits even if you haven't had much experience in the past, as long as, you are being instructed by a professional
- do start some form of upper and lower body strength training advised by a professional

- start “Kegel” exercises for strengthening and relaxing pelvic floor. Example: pretend to stop your wee and hold for 10 sec x 10. Try to contract slowly, increasing tension up to a count of 10, then slowly release and relax fully before your next repetition. Practice this sitting, lying and in squat positions. Practice strengthening the power of these muscles by contracting as hard as you can, as fast as you can when you sneeze, cough and laugh, or whenever you think about it. Get in to the habit now so you can prevent incontinence in your third trimester and post birth. Having these muscles strong during pregnancy will help with the birth process and recovery after giving birth.

## **2ND TRIMESTER**

### **WHAT’S HAPPENING?**

Your uterus is starting to stretch and expand, including the “round ligaments” that hold your uterus to your pelvic bones. This means that you are likely to feel sharp pains deep in your tummy either on the right, left or both sides. You may feel these pains when using your abdominals and/or twisting. This is normal, but you should slow down and listen to them. The best position to ease the pain is to stop and curl up gently (bend your spine and pelvis forward) kneeling down or sitting, hug your tummy if need be! Also, kneeling on all fours and breathing slowly, trying to relax that area can help. This is probably a sign that you are doing too much abdominal work and may need to modify your exercise or sport.

The hormone relaxin has kicked in as well, to help your body start to stretch and expand, so you feel more mobile, and the ligaments of your body will start to soften and lose there stiffness. This means that your tendons and muscles have to support you more, but they too soften and become a bit flimsy from from relaxin. This is another reason to become fit and strong before conceiving.

Your baby, placenta and uterus are growing, and are therefore pressing on your stomach, intestines, nerves and arteries around your spine and pelvis. This will continue until you give birth. This can lead to leg muscle cramps, nerve problems, and indigestion. When you lie on your back the excess weight of the baby, placenta ad uterus compress the artery and veins going to and away from the baby, therefore, exercising and sleeping on your back should be avoided. The position that creates the most space for your uterus and baby to stretch, as well as, off loading pressure on your organs and blood vessels, is kneeling on all fours. Second best, standing and leaning forwards onto a table, or counter. I suggest doing this daily. These are also great

positions to slow down and relax your breathing. Breathing helps with oxygenation for you and your baby, as well as, decreasing tension in your body and mind. This will become more relevant as each month progresses, so now is a good time to start. This is also a good time to start any “Hypnobirthing” courses or books. You can start practicing breathing, relaxation techniques, as well as, various birth positions.

Your fluid volumes are increasing so your gums may bleed, you may bruise easily, nose bleeds, feet and ankles swell, or you feel like you need to put them up. Do so!! If you have a sitting job, then get up often and go for short walks. Exercise is a great way to shift fluid. Put your feet up at the end of the day and do some reading. The excess fluid volume and pressure coming from the womb is why some women get varicose veins and hemorrhoids.

#### EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

- tummy crunches and anything lying on your back should be avoided. Stick to “core” type exercises like plank, side plank, supermans, walking hands over a fitball, cable exercises in the gym. You should not overdo core exercises as you will need to let your tummy stretch and expand rather than tighten too much, however, gentle core recruitment is safe and wise to do at this stage. Do not hold a contraction longer than 10 sec and do not go to normal abdominal classes that are geared towards non pregnant population.
- at this stage you can do exercises on a fitball with your head on the ball and legs out in a suspension bridge position (weighted bridges) just not your back on the floor, but you need to be stable and strong enough to get into and out of the position on the ball, so you must have practiced this one beforehand

#### PICTURE

- watch thumb and wrist positions when holding onto equipment. You want to be neutral or straight at all times, or in positions of extension, not flexion (hand bent back is ok, hand bend forward towards palm is not ok). This is because the tendons of your wrists go flimsy, and can over-stretch in positions of flexion (palms towards forearms).
- definitely stretch but always feel the stretch in the muscle not in the tendon, or near joints. Choose positions not on your back, and positions where your lower back and pelvis are NOT over tucked, over arched, or slouched. Important areas to stretch are: calves, hamstrings, quads, inner thighs, glutes, lats, upper back, gentle torso twists in standing, wrist flexors.

#### PICTURE

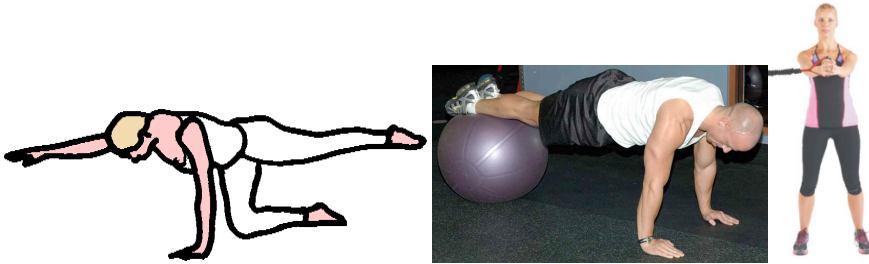
- If you feel pain in your Sacroiliac joints (joints in the back of your pelvis) or pain in your pubic symphysis (front of your pelvis) then you did too much in your session, or you were not in the correct position, likely too wide with

your feet. This should subside within a day. If it does not see a physiotherapist.

### REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

- maintain some core, although abb crunches are out

EXAMPLES: planks & side planks, superman, over the top (hold or go forwards/backwards) with arms/side to side with legs, arm lifts & lowers with side band tension



- maintain good upper body, wrist and leg strength to handle lifting, carrying and being mobile after the baby is born. Also, in order to help keep your ligaments and tendons robust.

### EXAMPLES:

- press ups, dips on a chair hips/knees/ elbows 90 90 (also good for core), upright rows, front and side raises, lat pull downs with band kneeling or sitting, standing band arm rows, balance on 1 leg, single leg squat in mirror barefoot, squats hip width and sumo squats (very good to start now), doorknob squats, functional squats, warrior pose, triangle pose: note for all keep knee caps over mid toes Hold 5-10 sec x 5 R&L, clams, reverse clams are also good.

- maintain cardio fitness levels through safe cycling (you are in a slight bent over posture so good for relieving organ and vessel pressure), cross trainer, stair climbing (taking stairs instead of lift), walking, swimming, and pregnancy specific exercise classes.

- Continue Kegel exercises

## 3RD TRIMESTER

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

You are growing a big belly! Your pelvis will start to tilt forwards from the weight in the front. For people who are “sway back” or “posterior tuckers” (flat backs), this is quite good, but for people who are already quite forward tilted with arched lower backs, this can cause a problem.. You may

need a Serola Sacroiliac belt and get used to tucking under a bit, so that you do not over arch your lower back.

All the things from second trimester are amplified now. Increase pressure on your organs and blood vessels. So, spending time on all fours is important. Try to do daily if you can. You should be sleeping mostly on your left.

Your stomach muscles are being stretched out and you have to allow this to happen. Massaging your tummy with oils helps. Getting your husband/partner to help out while you are on all fours is quite good! You can still do exercise that involve your tummy while doing arm exercises, but time to avoid most core and tummy specific exercises. You can, however, continue “supermans” (four point kneeling, pulling lower belly up and in, adding arm and/or leg movements if you are strong enough, and have no pain when doing so).

You will need to wind down exercise and work, and get lots of sleep. Relaxation classes, meditation will be useful. Hypnobirthing books and cd's are great for this at home.

#### EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS:

- slow things down, it is still good to exercise, but listen to your body. Do, less reps, less exercises per session etc. But your body will tell you.
- your fluid volume is very high now so put your feet up after periods of sitting and exercise
- no exercise on your back and you will need to support your bump side lying
- if you feel SIJ or pubic pain speak to a physiotherapist

#### REASONABLE FITNESS GOALS IF FEELS RIGHT:

- maintain some shoulder, wrist and upper body strength keeping wrists neutral. Even if that means lifting and carrying light objects. Try to use skills used and practiced from exercise in second trimester into functional recruitment of muscles and movements when doing activities of daily living in your third trimester. For example, lifting and carrying things, vacuuming, cleaning. Think of warrior pose when vacuuming, squats when lifting and picking things up, wrist position when holding frying pan etc.
- you can still do arm exercises like: upright row, shoulder raises, wall presses and band pulling
- you can still do full squat routine, but maybe one squat type per session and just do a few

- clams or oyster exercises for outer bum muscles are still good to do, as long as you stretch these muscles afterwards. You can stretch your bum muscles in sitting, PICTURE
- you will have to place a folded towel under your bump to support it when you are on your side, and you should go onto all fours to change sides rather than roll over from the top
- maintain cardio fitness with walking, cross trainer, stair climbing, gentle hill walking and swimming
- continue Kegel exercises
- At about 36 weeks, start to massage perineum and learn to relax and open that area
- sitting on a fitball do figure of eights with your bum and hips, forwards backwards, side to side and circles. This is a safe way to maintain gentle core strength and fun for the baby! Sitting on a fitball as of 35 weeks is better for the baby and your pelvis as it allows for movement and helps the baby to “descend” into the pelvis.