

# strength in motherhood

## INCORPORATING MOVEMENT & MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR PREGNANCY

During pregnancy, it's no secret that your body experiences changes, inside and out. The first and third trimesters can be especially difficult on the body and mind as your bump grows, energy levels slump, and you may experience swelling, constipation, headaches, anxiety, worry about childbirth and motherhood. However, getting regular exercise and practicing mindfulness during pregnancy can help reduce and alleviate many common symptoms of pregnancy such as discomfort and stress.

So, how does one squeeze movement and mama zen into their busy life while growing a bun in the oven?

- 1. First rule of thumb when it comes to exercise during pregnancy is to make it fun and easy.** Create an uplifting, happy Spotify or iTunes playlist to get you moving. Get a new pair of workout shoes that offer comfort and support for your changing body. Find a prenatal workout class or group; it can be exciting and enjoyable to try new things—aim to find pregnancy-safe fitness programs and classes that include strength training, cardio, and mobility exercises.

- 2. Get motivated by the health benefits of prenatal exercise and meditation during pregnancy.** Exercise during pregnancy also improves muscle tone, strength, balance, coordination, improves your posture, increases your energy, helps you sleep better, and helps you maintain a healthy weight. Consistent movement and activity helps keep you fit during pregnancy, which may help better prepare you for childbirth and give you endurance to get through labor, too. Win-win. (\*1).

Meditating during pregnancy doesn't have to mean going on a retreat to India, or blocking off hours on end to find peace and quiet; it can mean a daily practice at home, costing you nothing but a few minutes. About 18 percent of women experience depression during pregnancy, and around 21 percent experience serious anxiety (\*2), so incorporating mindfulness into your pregnancy is a way to bring positivity and peace into a life filled with non-stop commotion and expectations. Mindfulness during pregnancy can help reduce stress, boost positive emotions and feelings, help prevent premature birth, may promote healthy development, and add a stillness that's so desperately needed in a society that is always on the go (\*2).

**Mindfulness practice:** Close your eyes, place your hands on your belly, and take a big breath in through your mouth, filling up your lungs from bottom to top, hold for a few seconds, and then slowly release that breath through your nose. Repeat that 5-8 times.



# strength in motherhood

## INCORPORATING MOVEMENT & MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR PREGNANCY CONT'D

### 3. **Get outside into fresh air and nature.**

When weather permits, get outside and get some exercise in air that isn't recirculated from a heater or AC unit. Don't overthink it and consider creating easy, achievable goals: take a walk around your neighborhood, a meadow, a local trail, or go for a trail run. Bring your yoga mat outside into your backyard or to a local park. Encourage a friend to join you so you can unplug and still feel safe while socializing and catching up; exercise is better with company.

### 4. **Remember you need vitamin D.**

Our mostly-indoor modern society has led to epidemic levels of vitamin D deficiencies; the benefits of vitamin D during pregnancy include lower risks of preeclampsia, lower risk of asthma in early childhood, lower risk of gestational diabetes, lower risk of first trimester miscarriages, and potentially higher percentages of live birth rates among women undergoing fertility treatments (\*3).

### 5. **Give yourself grace and listen to your body.**

Committing to a regular fitness plan and daily practice of mindfulness, especially during pregnancy, when you may not feel well or want to take more naps than walks, is hard. Remember rest is just as important; always listen to your body. Be gentle on yourself and your spirit; remember your fitness level or plan during pregnancy will not look or feel like it did before pregnancy, and that is okay - more than okay.

Some days you will feel like a magical unicorn who can conquer the world with a workout, and some days your workout will be a Netflix marathon while munching on crackers to help ease nausea. Start small, make achievable goals, and remember to breathe along the way.

Prepare your body and your mind for motherhood by incorporating healthy habits into your daily and weekly routine, even if it's just a short walk around the block, stretching at your desk, unplugging for an hour before bed, taking 5 deep breaths at a stoplight, taking your lunch break outside, etc.

Simple, regular movements and mindfulness practice will help you feel more comfortable throughout your pregnancy, more prepared for childbirth, and hopefully help you meet some mamas in your local community along the way.

Sources:

(1) <https://bit.ly/2UNkain>

(2) <https://bit.ly/2VCwjH3>

(3) <https://bit.ly/2P1ILNO>