

Your changing body

During your first trimester, your body will go through some dramatic changes. By the end of the first 13 weeks, you may not **look** very pregnant, but you will probably **feel** quite different.

At this stage, pregnancy hormones cause almost all the changes in your body. Remember *the placenta*? That's the small organ that grows along the inside wall of your uterus to nourish your baby. Well, it also produces hormones to help your body support your baby, too. This building process is complex and takes a lot of energy. That's why you feel so tired in your early months.

The changes in your body will not be very noticeable to other people. You may not even notice that your uterus is slowly growing—from the size of a pear to the size of a cantaloupe. Your milk glands develop and your breasts feel fuller, heavier, and more tender. Your heart works harder now because your body has produced extra blood to support the growing placenta and to provide oxygen and nutrients to your baby. You may be more aware of your breathing. Some women feel breathless because of hormone changes. The good news is that your menstrual cycle will stop. If you have any bleeding during pregnancy, consult your health-care provider right away.



1st trimester

SLEEPING DURING PREGNANCY

Neither the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, nor the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, recommends any particular pattern or position for sleep.

(See page 89 Feeling dizzy when you are flat on your back.)



- an infection
- bleeding
- problems with leaking amniotic fluid
- the breaking of the amniotic sac

Based on your circumstances, you should continue to use condoms to protect you and your growing baby from sexually transmitted infections.

Some couples feel closer during this special time and continue to enjoy sex until just before their baby is due. Other couples feel their relationship is strained by all the changes taking place. They find that sex is not as fulfilling during pregnancy. Your partner may be worried that having sex could harm the baby. If either of you is uncomfortable about sexual relations, make time for other kinds of physical touch. You can cuddle with each other, hold hands, give or get a massage, or take a bath together.

If you are comfortable with the idea, you can explore alternatives to vaginal sex such as masturbation and oral sex. Just a warning about oral sex: ask your partner to be very careful **not to blow any air into your vagina**. Doing this could force air into your bloodstream, which could be fatal to both you and your baby.

Exercise during pregnancy

Whether you are pregnant or not, exercise is good for you. However, it's important that you not overdo the exercise program you choose. We suggest you try different workouts that can be part of your daily routine: aerobic exercise (with caution), strength training, yoga, and tai chi.

Aerobic exercise

Exercise that makes your heart beat faster than when you are resting is called aerobic exercise. It can include brisk walking, jogging, riding a bike, swimming, or team sports.

If you have been active before you became pregnant, you can likely continue with the same, or a slightly lower, level of activity. Discuss your exercise plans with your health-care provider early in your pregnancy to make sure you do not have any health problems that would make vigorous exercise risky. Most women who are runners can continue to run when they are pregnant without harming their growing baby. If you feel pain in the pubic region, this is a sign that your body is not adapting well to running and you should stop.

Exercise is good for both the mother and the baby and you can begin to exercise during your second trimester without fear of miscarriage or labour problems. If you haven't been physically active at least two to three times per week before becoming pregnant, you should wait until your second trimester to begin exercising, and only do so after you discuss your choices with your health-care provider.

If you are worried about exercising too hard, try the “talk test.” It's very simple: you should always be able to carry on a conversation during your workout. Otherwise, reduce your level of effort.

Once your health-care provider says it's okay to exercise, begin to do so. Walk, swim, or join a fitness class. Some classes are designed just for pregnant women and new mothers. If you are part of a regular aerobics class, talk to your teacher about what you might need to avoid (routines that are high-impact or that put stress on your lower back).

Strength training

Building and maintaining muscle mass is an important part of any exercise program. But be cautious! Remember to breathe continuously and smoothly during each part of the weight training movement. Talk to your health-care provider before you begin or continue a weight-training program.

WHEN IS IT NOT SAFE TO EXERCISE?

As you read this list, check off any of the statements that are true for you.

- I have heart problems.*
- I have a serious lung condition and/or breathing problems.*
- I have high blood pressure.*
- I have experienced bleeding from my vagina during this pregnancy.*
- I have low levels of iron in my blood (anemia).*
- I am carrying more than one baby.*
- I have problems controlling my blood sugar levels.*
- I have concerns about my blood sugar levels.*
- My health-care provider has told me the fetus is too small for its age.*
- I am at high risk for preterm labour.*
- I am very underweight or have been diagnosed with an eating disorder.*
- I suspect I have a rupture of the membranes.*

If you have ticked any of the boxes above, you should not exercise during your pregnancy until you have discussed your condition with your health-care provider.