

The importance of exercise during pregnancy

PreNatal Fitness

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To exercise or not to exercise...that is the question. Many of us have been warned against exercise during pregnancy. However, our doctors tell us that it is safe.

Who should we listen to?

From the research, exercise is not only safe during pregnancy, but it is recommended. Pregnancy is a natural function for women. It is not an illness. A pregnant woman is not as fragile as previously believed. In fact, physical activity has been shown to enhance the health and well-being of the woman, the pregnancy and the baby.

There are many benefits to staying active during pregnancy. It helps:

- Manage the adjustment of physical and emotional changes.
- Manage stress.
- Keep weight gain in the normal range (30-35 lbs.)
- Maintain muscle tone.
- Stimulate metabolism and the ability to digest food.
- Decrease constipation.
- Increase energy.
- Manage water retention in the legs and feet.
- Enhance breathing and recovery from physical activity (i.e. stairs.)

- Maintain posture.
- Decrease backache.
- Enhance sleep at night.
- Stimulate the baby through movement and heart beat changes.
- Make labor and delivery easier to handle.
- Manage and quicken the recovery to the mother's pre-pregnant body.
- Manage postpartum emotional changes.

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS:

"If I have never exercised before, should I start now?"

This is not the time to start an exercise program. But general activity and movement is important. Walking is always an easy and accessible way to remain active.

It can be done 3 times a week for 15 - 20 minutes.

"What kind of exercise is advised?"

Exercise during pregnancy should be easy to moderate. A good recommendation is also to use the "TALK" test: if you can talk while you are exercising, you are alright.

"What should be Avoided?"

- Strenuous or competitive activity. Any activity that makes it very difficult to breathe.
- Exercises that require lying on your back - it will slow the blood flow to the heart.
- Saunas, steam rooms, hot tubs or any



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exercise that increases the mother's body temperature to over 100 degrees.

Furthermore, stop, discontinue exercise and seek medical attention if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Bloody (red or brown) vaginal discharge.
- Any "gush" of fluid from the vagina.
- Persistent headache, faintness or dizziness.

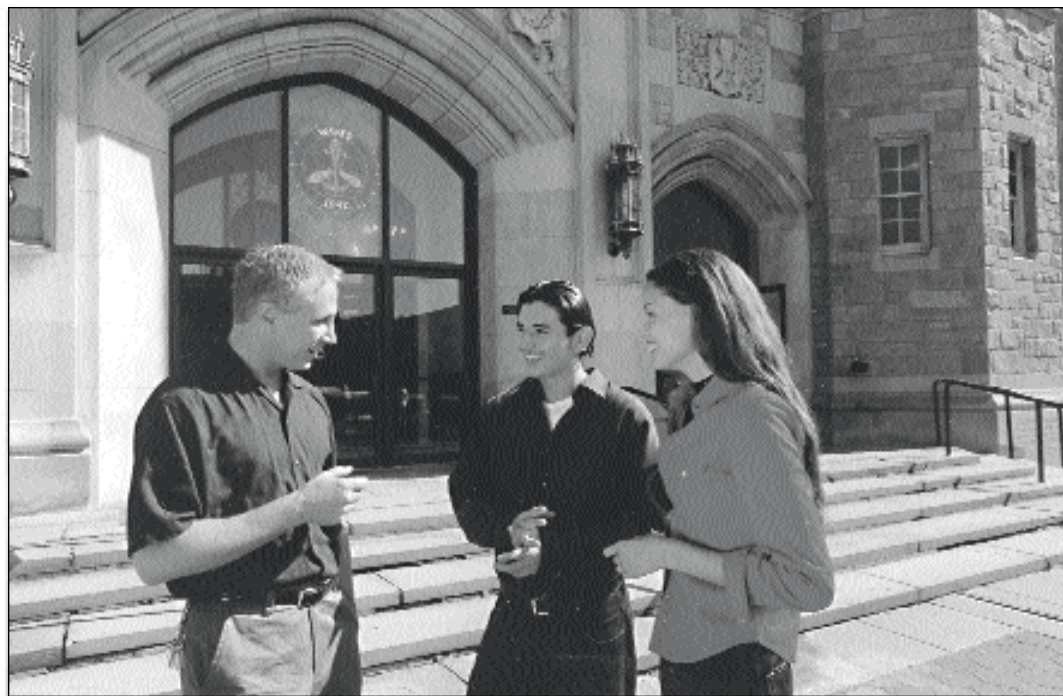
- Severe fatigue, heart palpitation or chest pain.

- Any contractions, cramping or abdominal pain.

For further information, please contact the Lehman College Student Health Center, Building T3, Room 118, Bronx, NY, (718) 960-8900.

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