Activities During Pregnancy

**Working**

There is very little evidence that continuing to work is harmful during pregnancy. At times a woman has certain medical conditions, a high–risk pregnancy, or other complications that require her to work fewer hours or to stop working altogether. There can be dangers in the workplace to the developing fetus such as chemicals (for example, anesthetic gases, aluminum, arsenic, benzene, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, lead, or mercury).

As long as the work is safe and not a cause of excessive stress, the woman with a low–risk pregnancy can continue working. Sometimes it is necessary to modify her job for light duty, frequent breaks, frequent position changes, and the opportunity to put her feet up. Sometimes it is recommended to cut back on your hours during the third trimester simply due to the demands of pregnancy on her body.

Pregnant women should investigate their health insurance benefits, including maternity leave, and should know the law.

**Traveling**

Most pregnant women can travel safely up until the baby is born, with the exception of women who have medical problems or high–risk pregnancies. Some advice when traveling includes:

* Always use your seatbelt.
* Were comfortable, loose clothes.
* Take along a snack and drinking water.
* Stretch your legs or take a short walk for at least 5 minutes every hour or 2.
* On a long trip, take a copy of your medical record.
* Do not ride on a motorcycle.
* If you are driving, plan to drive no more than 5-6 hours and to take frequent rest stops.
* Do not take any medications for motion sickness or diarrhea without consulting your health care professional.

Usually the second trimester is the most comfortable to travel (4th through 6th months of pregnancy). During the second trimester, the body has adapted to pregnancy. Often you have less morning sickness and more energy.

**Bathing**

You can continue taking tub baths, showering, and swimming during pregnancy. You should avoid excessively hot water (like sauna or spa) because it can cause your body temperature to rise and can be harmful to the baby.

**Sex**

Healthy women can continue normal sexual relations during the entire pregnancy. Don’t be surprised if your interest in sex is different: maybe more or maybe less. As your abdomen grows, you will want to try different positions such as lying on your side or being on top.

Women who are at risk for miscarriage or premature labor should abstain from intercourse or stimulation of the breasts, which can cause contractions.

Your health care provider may ask you to abstain from intercourse for other pregnancy complications as well.

**Exercise**

You can probably continue whatever forms of exercise you were doing before you became pregnant, as long as your pregnancy is normal. You will feel better during your pregnancy if you stay active. Some women say that exercise during pregnancy made their deliveries easier.

Walking and swimming are excellent choices for exercise, especially if you were not exercising before pregnancy. Start gradually, listen to your body. Avoid any exercise that could cause injury to your abdomen.

**Precautions**

“Don’t” do this, don’t do that”. You have probably heard every “old wives’ tale” in the book. These are the precautions I really want you to know.

* Don’t smoke. Smoking increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight, and many other problems. Smoking increases your babies risk of SIDS.
* Don’t use drugs. Cocaine, heroin, and even marijuana increase the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, and birth defects. Babies can be born addicted to drugs.
* Don’t take medications or herbal remedies until you talk with your OB provider. Even OTC medications and “natural” meds can be harmful.
* Don’t drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is one of the leading causes of birth defects, including mental
* retardation that could be prevented. No amount of alcohol is considered safe.
* Do not change the cat litter or eat raw or undercooked meats. Especially if you have a cat that goes outside. These are sources of toxoplasmosis, an infection that can be harmful to your baby.