

YOUR GUIDE TO

AQUANATAL

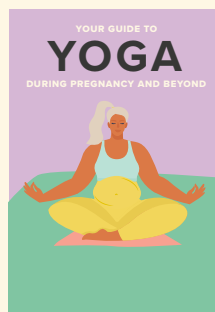
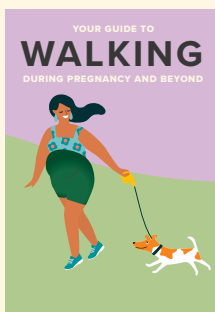
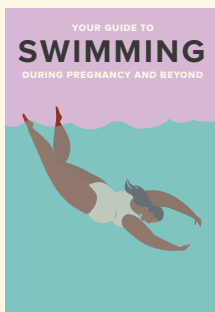
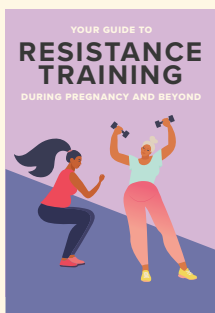
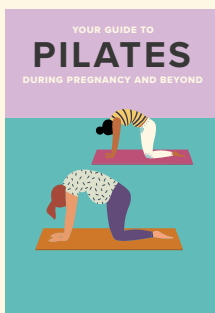
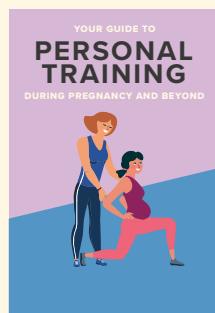
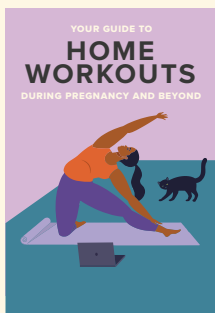
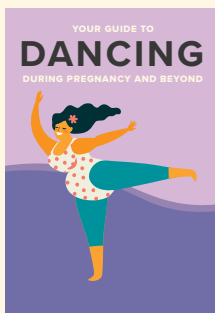
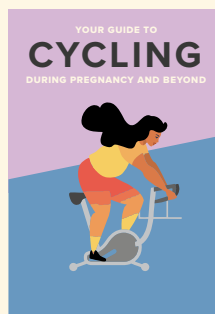
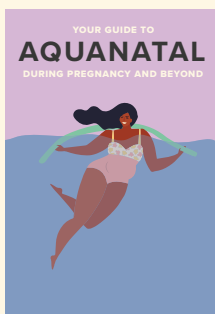
DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



ACTIVE
PREGNANCY
FOUNDATION



ACTIVITIES COVERED IN THIS SERIES



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Water-based activities are low-impact, and therefore one of the safest forms of activity you can do during your pregnancy.

There are many benefits, including enjoying the sense of weightlessness. You may feel lighter and have a greater freedom of movement. Water provides the environment to relax, helping to reduce worries or fears. You may also feel that you have more energy after the session, and sleep better.

There is less risk of injury, jarring of joints and muscle soreness afterwards. It also helps to reduce pain and swelling, improve the circulatory and respiratory system and lower blood pressure.

**Not active?
Start
gradually!**

**Already
active?
Keep going!**

Aquanatal is a water-based group exercise class designed specifically for pregnant women and childbearing

people. It is performed in chest-deep water, and can include elements of aerobics, yoga, relaxation and deep breathing exercises. It does not require you to be a confident or competent swimmer as the class should only be taught in water where you can stand.

Aquanatal classes are social, friendly and fun, and are a great opportunity to meet people and make friends, whilst stretching and strengthening your body.



DO's

- ⚡ Choose 'aquanatal' classes over other standard aquacise classes, as they have been designed specifically for you.
- ⚡ Speak to your instructor to ensure the class is right for you. Some focus on high intensity aerobics, whilst others focus on relaxation.
- ⚡ Work at your own pace - don't be afraid to decrease the intensity or take a break if needed.
- ⚡ If you are feeling unwell, inform the instructor who will help you out of the pool and, if necessary, get help.
- ⚡ Drink regularly before and throughout the class to prevent dehydration and overheating.
- ⚡ Always check that the instructor is a qualified aquanatal professional.

- ⚡ Don't overstretch yourself past your normal range of movement.
- ⚡ Don't wear waist belts which add buoyancy.
- ⚡ Avoid circuit classes which require you to undertake land-based exercises alongside the water-based exercises.
- ⚡ Avoid twisting and overhead (out of the water) movements.
- ⚡ Don't attend deep water suspension aqua-aerobic classes.

DON'Ts

- ⚡ Do not eat immediately before the class, allow at least 30 minutes.
- ⚡ Don't continue with the class through pain, lightheadedness, breathing difficulties, contractions, vaginal bleeding, amniotic fluid leakage or any other unusual symptoms. Stop and seek advice.

TOP TIPS

- ★ Take advice from your instructor as to what you can do as you progress through your pregnancy.
- ★ During pregnancy the body produces the hormone relaxin, which softens ligaments and allows the body to stretch further than normal. Therefore, be careful to avoid stretching beyond your pre-pregnancy range of movement.
- ★ Always warm up and cool down so that your body can adjust to the changing temperatures.
- ★ Find a maternity swimsuit that you're comfortable in, consider a costume with a built-in supportive bra.
- ★ Keep the breasts covered as much as possible to allow the water to support them.
- ★ Aquanatal is suitable and beneficial for women suffering with pelvic girdle pain. As the activity is in water, you will experience the benefit of feeling weightless.



AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Give your body time to heal, prioritise rest and recovery in the early weeks. If you've had a straightforward birth, you can start gentle exercises as soon as you feel up to it. This could include walking, gentle stretches, pelvic floor exercises and exercises that target the deepest layer of the abdominal muscles. If you've had a caesarean or any surgical intervention and/or complications, swimming should be avoided until any wounds have completely healed.

The 6-8 week postnatal check is a good time to discuss physical activity with your healthcare professional. Reintroduce activities gradually and focus on technique, breathing, pelvic floor and abdominal function. You should wait until seven days after postnatal bleeding (lochia) has stopped before taking part in swimming or water-based physical activities.

Many aquanatal instructors allow postnatal women to join their class, allowing for a gentle reintroduction to

water-based activities, such as standard aquacise classes.

You should only return to higher intensity activities once you have recovered from childbirth and in the absence of any signs or symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction. Consider seeking the support of a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist during this time.

Breastfeeding, when being active at a moderate intensity or when taking part in strength training, is safe and does not impact on breast milk quality or infant growth. Expressing or feeding your baby before taking part in water-based activities is recommended.



GENERAL ADVICE

Ask your healthcare professional about the Chief Medical Officers' national guidance for physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth.

DURING PREGNANCY

It's worth noting that the national guidance applies to uncomplicated pregnancies. We suggest taking this resource with you to your next appointment and to discuss your active pregnancy with your midwife or other healthcare professional.

**If it feels comfortable,
KEEP GOING**

**If it's uncomfortable,
STOP & SEEK ADVICE**



AFTER CHILDBIRTH BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

Reintroduction of physical activity after birth should be gradual and individualised.

The 6-8 week postnatal check is a good time to discuss this with your healthcare team, remember to take this document with you.

With any signs and symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction, more intense activities should not resume and referral to a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist is recommended.



“Being active has many mental and physical health benefits, so as a midwife, I can’t wait to spread the word and share these fantastic resources with new mums, mums-to-be and my professional colleagues.”

Dr Jacque Gerrard, Midwife
MBE DU_{niv} MSc RM RGN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DISCLAIMER

Always consult and follow the advice of your healthcare professional.

This resource does not constitute or replace medical advice.

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