

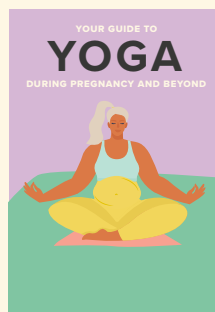
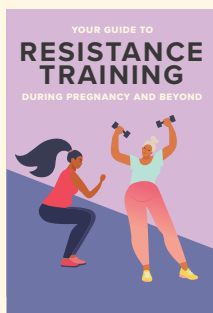
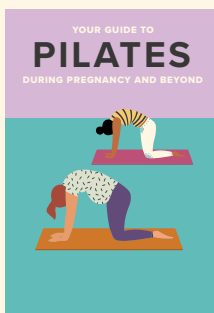
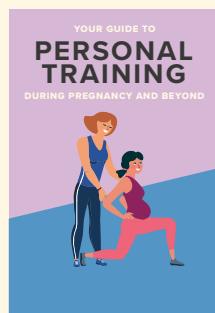
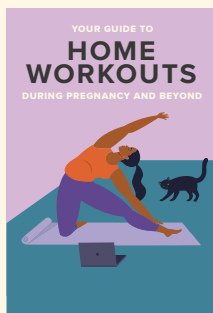
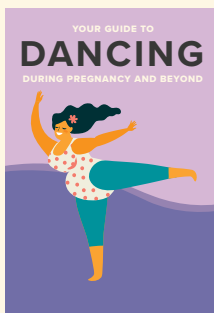
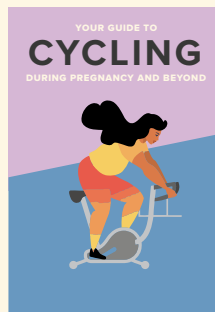
YOUR GUIDE TO

PILATES

DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



ACTIVITIES COVERED IN THIS SERIES



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Pilates is an increasingly popular form of physical activity, and as it is low impact, it is a great way to stay active throughout pregnancy and in the postnatal period.

The main aim of Pilates is to increase core and general strength whilst also improving posture, flexibility and balance. This is especially beneficial as your bump grows, centre of gravity shifts, and ligaments relax in preparation for birth.

Pilates exercises use slow, controlled and flowing movements with precise positioning of the body to both strengthen and stretch muscles. There is also a strong focus on pelvic floor work combined with deep

breathing to strengthen the body's core muscles.

Activities can be mat based; on apparatus e.g. reformer, chair, tower; or with the addition of small equipment such as balls, resistance bands, and Pilates circles.

Pilates gives you the opportunity to take a break from the everyday stresses of life and tune into your body. It's also a great way to reintroduce physical activities after childbirth.

**Not active?
Start
gradually!**

**Already
active?
Keep going!**



DO's

- ⬆ Find a qualified pre- and postnatal Pilates instructor who can support and guide you with modifications throughout pregnancy and beyond.
- ⬆ Make movements smaller and/or modify exercises as needed – ask your instructor for guidance.
- ⬆ Wear comfortable loose clothing – consider layering to accommodate for changing room and body temperature.
- ⬆ Wear a supportive bra and consider bump supporting leggings or belt.
- ⬆ Take a break as and when you need to.

- ⬆ Listen to your body and ask the instructor if something doesn't feel right.
- ⬆ Eat well and drink regularly before and throughout the session to prevent dehydration and overheating.

DON'Ts

- ⬇ Don't force movements. Be kind to yourself as some exercises will feel different/more challenging during pregnancy.
- ⬇ Don't hold your breath whilst completing the exercises.
- ⬇ Avoid 'overstretching' and 'pushing through' a class as you may have done before pregnancy.
- ⬇ Avoid overheating and extreme heat conditions, e.g. Hot Pilates.
- ⬇ Avoid movements which involve lying flat on your back after the first trimester.
- ⬇ Avoid changing positions too quickly - don't sit down or stand up too quickly.
- ⬇ Don't continue the class through pain, lightheadedness, breathing difficulties, contractions, vaginal bleeding, amniotic fluid leakage or any other unusual symptoms. Stop and seek advice.

TOP TIPS

- ★ Find a qualified pre- and postnatal instructor who is the right fit for you, so you can look forward to class.
- ★ Take time to master the technique of diaphragmatic breathing i.e. when the diaphragm, deep core and pelvic floor work together, as this will help to maintain core strength.
- ★ Pay attention to what your tummy looks like when you're doing the exercises - doming or coning may indicate that the movement needs to be modified.
- ★ Rolling onto your side and walking up through the hands when coming up to standing from the floor can help to avoid unnecessary intra-abdominal pressure.
- ★ Pilates can be great if suffering from pelvic girdle pain, but remember to inform your instructor so they can modify exercises where necessary. Seeking help and advice from a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist is also recommended.



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, your recovery time will be longer.

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. If you need any guidance on these activities, you may wish to arrange a 1:1 session with a qualified instructor.

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. It is recommended that you express or feed your baby before taking part in a Pilates class. Also consider investing in a suitable bra that will give you support whilst training and remember to keep breast pads with you to manage any leaking that can occur.

If you are breastfeeding, it may be uncomfortable to perform exercises in a prone position. You may need to modify exercises or ask your instructor if you need guidance on how to do this.



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



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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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