

YOUR GUIDE TO

DANCING

DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



ACTIVITIES COVERED IN THIS SERIES

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YOUR GUIDE TO **CYCLING** DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



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YOUR GUIDE TO **YOGA** DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

‘Dancing’ covers a broad range of activities. Whether you’re joining a Zumba class or just dancing to the radio at home, it’s a great way of allowing your body to move whilst releasing those “feel good” hormones which help with relieving stress and tension too.

‘Dance fitness’ is usually a type of aerobic group exercise class, which involves some form of dance performed to music. Depending on the style of dance, workouts can be high or low intensity, so it’s important to choose a class that meets your needs.

If you’re new to dance fitness classes, start with a beginners’ class and work your way up. A dance teacher or Exercise to Music instructor will lead you through a series of choreographed steps. Don’t expect to learn them all in the first session, give yourself time to learn the moves.

Whilst most dance classes are taught in studios, you can dance anywhere! Depending on the style and intensity, you can improve your cardiovascular health, mobility, muscle strength, balance and coordination.

**Not active?
Start
gradually!**

Dancing through pregnancy and after childbirth is an accessible and fun way to maintain fitness and stay

active. And did you

know, researchers have found that children born to women who danced during their pregnancy had a greater need to be rocked to sleep and were more likely to play a musical instrument!

**Already
active?
Keep going!**



- ⚡ Enjoy the music and freedom to move.
- ⚡ Make sure that you dance at an intensity you are comfortable with.
- ⚡ Always tell the instructor or teacher that you are pregnant and where possible, look for classes or groups designed specifically for pregnancy and the postnatal period.
- ⚡ Wear comfortable loose clothing – consider layering to accommodate for changing room and body temperature.
- ⚡ In most cases, you don't need any special kit but consider wearing a supportive bra, appropriate footwear and bump supporting leggings or belt.
- ⚡ Take a break as and when you need to.
- ⚡ The dancing studio or space should be free from obstructions, not slippery, well ventilated and heated at the right temperature.
- ⚡ Eat well and drink regularly before and throughout the session to prevent dehydration and overheating.
- ⚡ Reduce high impact activities (such as jumping) which put extra strain on the pelvic floor.

DO's DON'Ts

- ❌ Avoid 'overstretching' and 'pushing through' a class as you may have done before pregnancy.
- ❌ Avoid overheating and extreme heat conditions e.g. hot studios.
- ❌ Avoid excessive stress to the ligaments and tendons. Large jumps, high kicks, deep squats and big knee bends (after 32 weeks) are not recommended.
- ❌ Don't forget to tell the instructor you're pregnant so that they can offer you modifications if needed.
- ❌ Don't continue dancing through pain, lightheadedness, breathing difficulties, contractions, vaginal bleeding, amniotic fluid leakage or any other unusual symptoms. Stop and seek advice.
- ❌ Avoid changing positions too quickly - don't sit down or stand up too quickly.
- ❌ Don't attend your class if you are feeling unwell.
- ❌ Dance styles that involve an increased risk of falling or direct impact to the bump should be avoided.
- ❌ After the first trimester, avoid movements which involve lying flat on your back for prolonged periods of time.

TOP TIPS

- ★ Let the instructor or teacher know how you're feeling from week to week, so they can give you modifications and alternatives if and when you need them.
- ★ With the associated change in posture and balance as your pregnancy progresses, using arms and legs together can become more challenging, so consider using one or the other.
- ★ Remember to adjust duration and intensity as your pregnancy progresses.
- ★ Some of the most relevant pregnancy changes for a dancer are related to ligament laxity. So dancers who are used to high intensity classes involving movements with maximum extension of joints, could put themselves at risk of injury if they don't reduce their movement range.



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. Choose less intense dance variations to begin with and build up the intensity over time.

You should only return to higher intensity dance classes 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.

The effects of the pregnancy hormones may be present for a long time after birth, and dancers, especially, should take care not to overstretch, as ligaments are very slow to repair, and this may result in discomfort and risk of injury.

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 dancing is recommended. 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.



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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