

EXERCISE + PREGNANCY

Should you exercise when pregnant or just put your feet up and take it easy? Reader **Elly Rutt** is pregnant again and doesn't want to make the same mistakes she made leading up to the birth of her first child. Follow her story as she discovers what she can and can't do.

Elly approached Ultra-Fit at 12 weeks pregnant with her second child. She was desperate for guidance and advice to help her to avoid a repeat of her last pregnancy 2 years ago. Elly was a competing Triathlete with 18% body fat when she found out she was pregnant first time round. She went to her GP, who told her to stop ALL exercise. She did as she was told and went from training 12 times a week to doing nothing, literally overnight. Her pregnancy was horrendous – she was sick up until 28 weeks, put on 28KG and had raised blood pressure, lower back pain, suspected pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes. She finally gave birth to a healthy and very large, baby boy (Luke, who is now 2).

3 weeks after the birth, feeling quite bitter and very determined, she was back exercising, doing cardio classes and kickboxing. She couldn't run due to a destroyed pelvic floor, but did everything else with a vengeance. It took a year and a half for her pelvic floor to recover. Now she's pregnant again, and having done some of her own research (and reading Ultra-Fit!), knows that the previous advice was misinformed. She felt sick up to 20 weeks, but now feels fine. She goes to the gym 4 times a week as well as power-walking, but misses her favourite activities

since contact sports and intense bursts of cardio exercise are not recommended during pregnancy.

Elly is a very self-motivated – she gets up at 5.30 every morning, is at the gym by 6 and home by 7 to get Luke up. She has a full time job. Her husband is also a Triathlete, who trains in the evenings.

In response to Elly's request for help we called in No More Excuses a personal training company that specialises in ante and post natal exercise. Clearly, Elly doesn't need any help to motivate her or perform basic cardio workouts – what she needs is guidance and instruction on safety, on core work, and on how to incorporate the right training into her daily routines. She also needs help with her eating, to ensure that she is achieving optimum nutrition for her baby, and for herself and her exercise routine. As well as being pregnant, Elly is already running after a toddler and working full time, and so time and energy are always at a premium, as for all mums!

No More Excuses personal Trainer Sonja Lloyd carried out a full assessment and identified Elly's goals as:

- To maintain a high level of fitness and core strength throughout the remainder



of pregnancy and beyond

- To improve posture and strength to comfortably accommodate pregnancy and associated physiological changes
- To minimise unnecessary weight gain, and avoid associated problems previously experienced, such as high blood pressure and blood sugar imbalances
- To address nutritional issues to combat above issues, whilst maintaining adequate calorie intake and optimum nutrition for mother and baby

Following the detailed consultation Sonja devised a programme for Elly to address these goals. The programme will progress and change as Elly moves from the 2nd and into her 3rd Trimester, and will then adjust again after the birth of her baby. The programme will focus on core strength, posture and nutrition, as well as providing guidance and boundaries for safe continuation of her current cardio gym routine.

Aerobic exercise is recommended on

most days of the week. This can be a power walk, jog, cycle or swim for 30 minutes – 1 hour. You should be able to continue a conversation whilst exercising, and should be breathing steadily. If you are struggling for breath or panting, slow down or stop. Listen to your body!, you may not feel like exercising every day and you must not force your body when you're feeling tired. Just go for a walk or rest if you don't feel up to it. Include 5-10 minutes warm up and cool down, and stretch afterwards.

Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels) must be done DAILY. These are explained and practised with the trainer initially, and then taken out of the PT programme to be completed on her own.

Strength, core and postural work during regular sessions with Sonja. Many of these exercises are multi-functional, i.e. they are also working the core muscles through use of the ball, balance and postural work. Some involve quite small movements, but will reap huge benefits! Exercises include pelvic tilts and basic core balance work on a fitball; a Plank with elbows on the ball (while bump allows!) and other exercises adapted to suit a growing bump and avoiding lying on your back for long periods. Postural exercise are designed to combat the physical changes that occur in the woman's body as the baby develops, resulting in a shift in the center of gravity as abdomen and breasts enlarge. These include anterior pelvic tilt (on one side or both sides equally), increased lumbar curve (lordosis), hyper-extended knees, and shoulders rotated forwards, carrying the head forward.

The effects of Relaxin, the hormone which helps the body to prepare for birth

and to allow the baby to pass more easily through the pelvis, exacerbate these changes. Remember that Relaxin affects all the joints in the body, not just the pelvis.

Postural dysfunction of the pelvis and shoulder girdle are common causes of specific and referred pain during pregnancy and this postural mal-alignment does not correct itself after birth. In fact postural habits, as well as repeated activity such as bending and lifting, (feeding and changing, carrying a baby in a car seat, lifting the baby...) mean that problems and pain can continue long after childbirth.

Much of this discomfort can be minimised with a thorough posture analysis and corrective stretching and strengthening exercises. Increased weight and redistribution of body mass also cause a shift in the center of gravity, so balance exercises will also be incorporated. Pregnant women need to be aware of their posture throughout the day and while carrying out daily activities, not just during training sessions.

Resistance exercises using hands or small free weights can facilitate posture re-alignment by:

Strengthening those muscles which will tend to be long and weak:

- Lower abdominals
- Rhomboids
- Posterior shoulder girdle (infraspinatus)
- Glutes and external rotators

Stretching those muscles which tend to become short and stiff:

- Hamstrings
- Hip flexors
- Pectorals

Elly's First Session With Sonja
'I caught up with Elly this morning as I wanted to get her feedback before coming back to you with an update. I thought it went really well. Due to the bad weather, we stayed indoors for the whole session, starting with a run through of her goals & training summary and a quick warm-up, before her core strength exercises. Her technique was fantastic on most of the exercises due to her experience, so she didn't need much coaching in that area, but she seemed to really enjoy the session and was challenged to some extent on most if not all of the exercises.

She told me today that "I worked some bits that haven't seen any action for a good few months and it was good to know that what I was doing was safe and would reap rewards in the future".

In particular, she mentioned that she could really feel her 'abs' over the weekend, but in a good way. She's looking forward to our second session on Friday, so it mustn't have hurt too much!'

The programme will progress and change as Elly moves into her 3rd Trimester, and then adjust again after the birth of her baby. The programme will focus on core strength, posture and nutrition, as well as providing guidance and boundaries for safe continuation of her current cardio gym routine. To follow Elly's progress leading up to the birth of her second child in March visit www.ultra-fitmagazine.com

For more information on Exercise and Pregnancy visit www.nomorexcuses.co.uk or email sonja@nomorexcuses.co.uk call: **0700 340 1287**

RESISTANCE & CORE STRENGTH TRAINING

Warm Up	Walking on the spot/around the room or garden, with shoulder shrugs, circles and step ups.		
Dynamic Stretches	Shoulder and arm swings, hip and leg swings (use a chair for support), lunges, squats and controlled torso twists		
Speedy Kegels*	Squeeze and lift the pelvic floor muscles as strongly and as quickly as possible. Just squeeze and let go. Allow a 3 second rest between each exercise. Repeat 10 times. (Do this routine twice a day)		
Squeezy Kegels*	Squeeze the pelvic floor muscles and hold for a slow count of five – work your way up to ten. Relax and rest for 10 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times		
Pelvic floor & core	Pelvic Tilts*	10	Sit on the ball, feet flat on the floor. Slowly tilt pelvis forwards and back
Pelvic floor & core	Bouncing		Bounce gently on the ball, adding marching arms and legs.
Lower back stretch	Spine Twist	5 each side	Sitting on the ball, gently and slowly twist around to one side, and then the other.

Spinal stretch	Cat Stretch with Ab Contractions*	5 each side	From an all-fours position. Exhale and round your lower back. Contract your abdominals. Relax your head and neck as your head goes down. Hold for 5 seconds, then inhale and go back to the starting position - keep back straight, don't over-arch.
Mobility and positioning for the baby	Hip Swings	5 each side	From an all fours position, and without moving your legs, slowly twist your right hip toward your right shoulder, as far as is comfortable. Hold for 2 seconds, then go back to centre and repeat with your left side.
Lower back & core	Superman*	10 each side	From an all-fours position, hands under your shoulders, knees under your hips. Take a deep breath, and as you exhale, tighten your abdominals and raise your right arm straight out in front of you. At the same time, extend your left leg straight out behind. Hold for 1 second.
Core	Plank*	1 minute x2	Support bodyweight on lower arms and knees. Keep spine in neutral. Hold the position, contracting the abdominals and breathe deeply.
Pelvic floor & core	Ball Pull Ins*	2 x 12	Kneel in front of ball and rest elbows on the ball. Drop weight forwards so that backside drops / spine is in neutral. Contract abdominals and push ball away, then pull back in.
Chest, shoulders & arms	Wall Press Ups	2 x 12	Standing, against a wall, place hands on the wall and keep your shoulders behind your hands. Push slowly away from the wall. Exhale on exertion.
Back	Lat Row	2 x 12	Sit on the floor with legs out in front. Anchor an exercise band around your feet. OR: Stand with a band wrapped around a banister or other solid object. Pull slowly back on the band in a rowing movement, keeping elbows in. Keep back straight, don't arch.
Back	'Dumb Waiter'	1 x 20	Sit on the ball (maintain posture) Place hands, palms up in front of you, elbows bent. Move hands out to the sides, keeping them level. Keep shoulders down and squeeze shoulder blades together.
Shoulders	Front and Lateral raise	2 x 12	Sit on the ball and hold a dumbbell in each hand. Raise arms straight out in front of you, at shoulder height. Lower and lift out to the sides. Lower and repeat each action.
Upper Back	DB Upright Row	15 x 3	Stand upright, feet hip-distance apart, tailbone tucked under, shoulder blades back and down. Lift weights (DB or band) to chest height, elbows out to the side, lower & repeat.
Middle Back	SB Reverse Fly (vary height of lat row as an alternative if not comfortable)	15 x 3	Rest your upper chest on the ball, feet or knees on the ground to balance. Lift weights out to the side, and lower in front of you, squeezing shoulder blades together. Repeat.
Buttocks, Hips, Legs	Alternating Lunge	20 total	Holding the pole for support, take a large step out with the right foot and bend both knees to lower towards the floor. Keep knees behind toes. Push back and repeat on the left leg. Use a balance disc under one foot for static lunges if balance allows.
Quads	SB Wall Squats	10 reps then 10secs hold/3	Place the ball between your lower back and the wall. Bend your knees into a seated position against the ball, keeping your back straight. Keep knees behind toes.
Hamstrings	SB Pull-Ins (remove when bump too big to be comfortable!)		Lie on your back with your feet up on the ball. Push your hips up so you're resting on your shoulders. Balance and then pull the ball in underneath you by bending your knees. Keep hips high and abs tight. Push away and pull back in without lowering your body.
Stretches	All	Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds.	Hip Flexors (use a chair) Quadriceps (don't grab your feet) Hamstrings (towel under knee and around foot) Lower Back (knees to chest, on side if preferred) Pectorals Don't over-stretch!

*PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Kegels are vital for all pregnant and post-natal women, and are performed by contracting the pelvic floor muscles in a regular and controlled fashion. Although often compared to stopping and starting the flow of urine, these contractions actually work and lift the delivery canal, ensuring healthy vaginal tissue and assisting with urinary control. The exercise has three parts: the urethral, vaginal and anal contraction, although many women find it difficult to separate them, and they tend to work in tandem rather than separately.

Important: During these exercises you should

- NOT feel any downward movement, only an upward pull
- NOT clench your thighs or buttocks
- NOT hold your breath

For more information on what you can and can't do during your pregnancy turn to page 100

...Continued from page 44

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WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T DO



When pregnant you must have the permission of your Midwife or other medical care-giver to undertake an appropriate exercise programme. The rules and guidelines for exercising during pregnancy (provided below) must be understood and adhered to at all times.

Source: ACOG: The American College of Obstetrics & Gynaecology 2002

ABSOLUTE CONTRAINDICATIONS TO AEROBIC EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

(AN EXERCISE PROGRAMME SHOULD NOT BE COMMENCED)

- Clinically significant heart disease
- Restrictive lung disease
- Incompetent cervix
- Multiple gestations at risk for premature labour
- Persistent second or third trimester bleeding
- Placenta previa after 26 weeks gestation
- Premature labour during the current pregnancy
- Ruptured membranes
- Pre-eclampsia / pregnancy induced hypertension (high blood pressure)

RELATIVE CONTRAINDICATIONS TO AEROBIC EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

(AN EXERCISE PROGRAMME SHOULD ONLY BE COMMENCED WITH YOUR MIDWIFE OR GP'S DIRECT APPROVAL)

- Severe anaemia (due to iron deficiency)
- Unevaluated maternal cardiac arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat)
- Chronic bronchitis
- Poorly controlled Type 1 diabetes
- Extreme morbid obesity
- Extreme underweight (BMI <12)
- History of extremely sedentary lifestyle
- Poorly controlled hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Orthopaedic limitations
- Poorly controlled seizures
- Poorly controlled hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid)
- Heavy smoker

GUIDELINES FOR EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY

- 1** In the absence of contraindications, pregnant women are encouraged to engage in 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise on most, if not all, days of the week. A pregnant woman should always check with her primary caregiver (midwife or GP) before beginning an exercise programme.

- 2** After the first trimester, pregnant women should avoid supine positions (lying on your back) during exercise for more than 30 seconds. Motionless standing should also be avoided.
- 3** Participation in a wide variety of recreational activities is safe. However any activity with a high risk of falling or abdominal trauma should be avoided.
- 4** Scuba diving should only be performed under a doctor's direction
- 5** Exertion at altitudes up to 6000 feet appears to be safe. Engaging in physical activities at higher altitudes carries a risk of hypoxemia.

WHEN TO TERMINATE EXERCISING WHILE PREGNANT

Stop exercising immediately and seek medical advice if any of the following occur:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Dizziness
- Dyspnoea (difficult, laboured or uncomfortable breathing) prior to exertion
- Headache
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness
- Calf swelling or pain (DVT must be ruled out)
- Pre-term labour
- Decreased foetal movement
- Amniotic fluid leakage

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY, BY TRIMESTER

First Trimester (Weeks 0-12)

- If you were previously active, you can continue your exercise programme!
- If you were previously inactive, you may begin an exercise programme but it should be started slowly. Anything apart from walking (which is an effective start!) should be carried out with a qualified exercise professional
- At a minimum, aim to accumulate 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on all or most days of the week



- Stay well hydrated and don't become fatigued or over tired

Second Trimester (Weeks 13-27)

- If you were previously active, you should maintain your exercise programme (sports which involve abdominal trauma should be modified or avoided)
- Consistency is the key to reaping the benefits of exercise during pregnancy
- If you choose to start an exercise programme at this stage, do so with a qualified exercise professional
- Do not exercise on your back for more than 30 seconds
- Stay well hydrated and don't become fatigued or over tired

Third Trimester (Week 28 - Delivery)

- Do not exercise on your back
- Listen to your body very closely at this stage
- Stay well hydrated and don't become fatigued or over tired
- MAINTAIN your activities to reap the benefits!

Remember! Achieving your goals is ultimately your responsibility and what you do outside of personal training sessions can and will affect your overall health and fitness. Changing your eating habits and performing the recommended routine on your own and in your own time, is vital to your success!