

Exercise during pregnancy is safe and beneficial to most women and their babies. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week divided over a minimum of three days per week. Be sure to consult with your healthcare provider for exercise recommendations before starting, to make sure you do the right kind of exercises at each stage of pregnancy.

Symptoms to be mindful of as you exercise while pregnant:

- Discomfort or pain in pelvic region
- Urine leakage
- Feeling of heaviness in pelvic region

If you experience any of these symptoms, please consult your physician about possible referral to the Inova Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy Program.

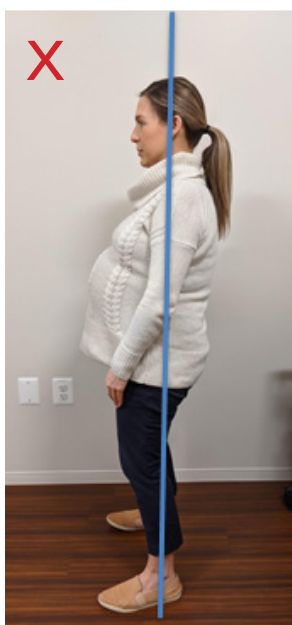
Citations: Bulging in abdomen The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Exercise during Pregnancy - ACOG. Acog.org. Published July 2019. Accessed March 12, 2020.

Exercising should be comfortable. Inova Physical Therapy offers women simple exercises and tips that can help with some common discomforts of pregnancy and even prepare your body for labor and delivery.

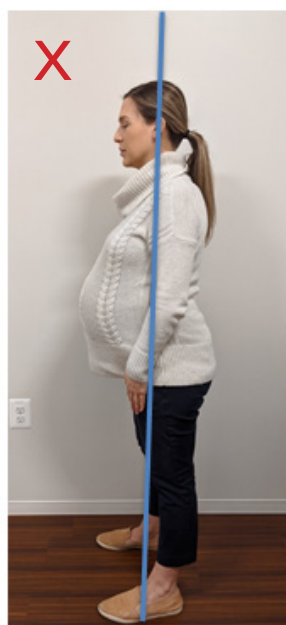
## Posture and Back Pain

If you're having back pain while standing, try to find a more comfortable posture. Here are some tips:

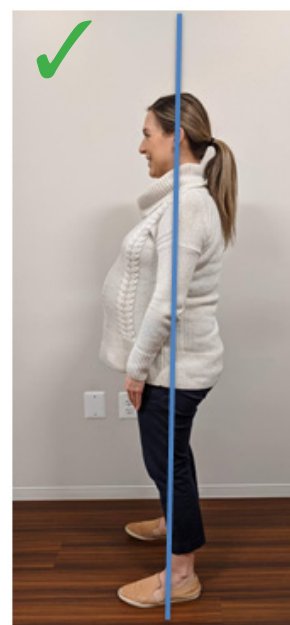
1. Take a deep breath in and out. Relax your shoulders, bottom and knees.
2. Make sure your knees are not locked and your bottom is not clenched.
3. Shift your weight forward, backward and side to side, and then find your center.
4. Elongate the back of your neck and slightly rotate your head down (as seen in the picture below).
5. Your shoulder and shoulder blades should be resting on top of your rib cage, and your rib cage should be stacked on top of your pelvis. Make sure your knees are relaxed.
6. You should feel comfortable and relaxed in this standing position.



Leaning back, bottom clenched



Belly forward, low back arched



Ideal, trunk stacked over hips

## Lifting Mechanics

When lifting large objects off the floor, it may be best to use a squat technique.

Here's how:

- Stand comfortably with feet apart. As your baby grows, you may need to widen your stance.
- As you squat down, reach your hips back like you are about to sit in a chair.
- Make sure to keep your knees in line with your second toes.
- Knees should not move past your toes.
- Exhale out before lifting object back up to standing position.

## Safe Exercises in First Trimester Only

### Abdominal Isometric Hold

- Begin sitting with your back resting against a pillow or stability ball.
- Lift one leg and press your opposite hand into your thigh. You should be pushing into your thigh and slightly upward toward the ceiling. Hold this position for five seconds. Rest and repeat with the opposite side.
- Don't hold your breath. As your belly gets bigger, this exercise might become too difficult to perform. At this point, please stop performing this exercise.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10. Hold each rep for 5 seconds.
- Do this exercise four days a week.

### Bird Dog

- Begin on all fours, with your hands positioned directly under your shoulders.
- Straighten your arm and the opposite leg at the same time, until they are parallel with the floor. Hold briefly, and then return to the starting position.
- Make sure to keep your belly drawn in during the exercise. Avoid extending leg up toward ceiling causing back to arch. Do not hold your breath during this exercise.
- As your belly gets heavier, this may be a little uncomfortable. At this point, please stop performing this exercise.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



Step 1



Step 2



Step 1



Step 2

## Safe Exercises Throughout Pregnancy

### Pelvic Tilts

- Begin sitting upright in a chair with your hands on your hips.
- Gently tilt your pelvis backward, then return to a neutral position.
- Next, tilt your pelvis forward, then return to neutral position.
- Repeat, monitoring the movement with your hands.
- Make sure to keep your upper back relaxed during the exercise and focus the movement just on your pelvis. Avoid any ranges that cause pain.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise once a day.



Step 1



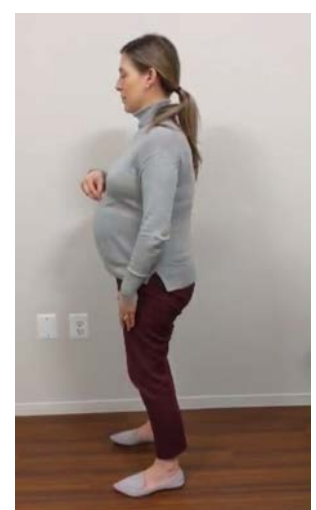
Step 2

### Belly Zip Up

- Stand with your belly relaxed and place your hand at bottom of your belly.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles as you think of lifting your baby up. Make a zipper motion up with your hand to help you visualize.
- Relax your abdominal muscles as you make an unzipping motion with your hand.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



Step 1



Step 2

### Abdominal Leg Extension

- Begin sitting on the floor with your back resting on a stability ball or pillow, your knees bent, your feet resting on the floor and your fingers resting on your stomach just above your hip bones.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles by pulling your navel up and in toward your spine. You should feel your muscles contract under your fingers.
- Hold this position, and then straighten one knee, holding your leg a few inches off the ground. Bring your leg back to the starting position and repeat with your other leg.
- Do not hold your breath.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



Step 1



Step 2

### Bridge With Ball

- Begin sitting on the floor with your back resting on a stability ball or pillows, your legs bent at the knees and your feet flat on the ground.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles and slowly lift your hips off the floor into a bridge position, keeping your back straight.
- Make sure to keep your trunk stiff throughout the exercise.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



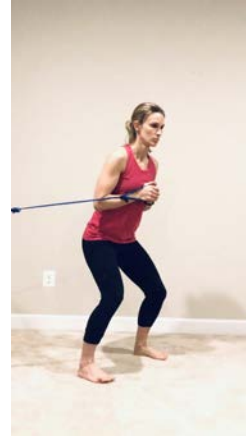
Step 1



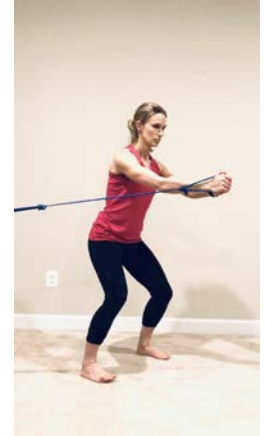
Step 2

### Palloff Press

- Begin standing upright with a resistance band attached to a stable anchor.
- Squat, then press your arms straight forward. Bring them back and repeat.
- Do not let your trunk rotate as you press the bar forward. Keep your abdominal muscles drawn in and your pelvic floor engaged. Avoid arching your back.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



Step 1



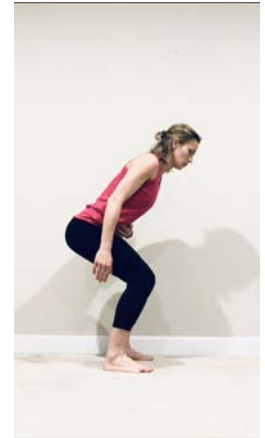
Step 2

### Squat

- Begin standing upright with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart.
- Sit back with your hips and let your knees bend, then straighten your legs and repeat.
- Make sure to keep your back straight. Support your belly with your hands if your back is arching or if you feel discomfort. Do not let your knees bend forward past your toes.
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps: Perform 10, take a break, then perform another 10.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



Step 1



Step 2

### Kegels

- To perform a Kegel, act as if you're preventing the passing of gas or stopping the flow of urine.
- Please do not Kegel during urination.
- It's easiest to do a Kegel while lying down or sitting, and it's more challenging to do a Kegel while standing. We recommend doing Kegels while standing if you're able to do so.
- Be sure not to use your bottom or abdominal muscles when trying to do a Kegel. If you're unsure whether you are performing Kegels correctly, please see an Inova pelvic floor physical therapist.
- Perform 10 Kegels as quickly as you can. If possible, repeat 1 to 2 more sets of 10 reps in a day.
- After performing these quick Kegels, try holding a Kegel for 10 seconds. Perform 10 reps. If possible, repeat 1-2 more sets of 10 reps in a day.
- Do this exercise four days a week.



To access the exercise videos, visit: <https://InovaPT.medbridgego.com/> Access Code: 8WWTWWKQ

To make an appointment with Inova Physical Therapy, call 1.877.604.6682.

To learn more about our program and our locations, visit [inova.org/physicaltherapy](https://inova.org/physicaltherapy)

*For reference: Information created by Inova Physical Therapy: Lindsay O'Keefe, DPT, Kathleen Wong, DPT, Melanie Gonzaga, MSPT, Lauren Trosch, DPT*