

Get Moving and Stay Active: Topic of the Month

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There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to physical activity. Finding what works for each individual and sticking to it is what matters most. Check out this topic to discover tools to support participants and staff to stay active during pregnancy and after.

Recommendations

According to the [Physical Activity Guideline for Americans, 2nd Edition](#), women should get at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity along with 2 days of muscle-strengthening activity each week.



Source: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (OASH).

Examples include:

- **Moderate-intensity aerobic activity** – a moderate walk or a casual bike ride
- **Muscle-strengthening activity** – lifting weights, working with resistance bands, or climbing stairs.

Benefits

Regular physical activity promotes healthy behaviors that can have both short- and long-term benefits to mother and child. Given the high prevalence of maternal mortality, physical activity for women of childbearing age is imperative.

Benefits include:

- Lower the risk of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and postpartum depression.
- Improve mood, focus, and sleep.

- Boost energy levels.
- Increase muscle building and balance.
- Increase weight maintenance.
- Reduce labor and recovery complications.
- Speed postpartum recovery.

Physical activity in pregnancy

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) shared answers to some frequently asked questions in [Exercise During Pregnancy](#). ACOG reports that during a “normal and healthy” pregnancy, it is safe to continue or start regular physical activity. However, it is best to consult with one’s health care provider to monitor the progress of pregnancy and decide whether and how much physical activity is considered safe.

Safe pregnancy activity

- **Walking:** Brisk (moderate-intense) walking is easy on the body.
- **Swimming:** Water activity supports your weight to avoid injury and muscle strain.
- **Biking:** Casual biking with a helmet on paved bike paths or sidewalks.
- **Yoga or Pilates:** Yoga reduces stress and improves flexibility. *Avoid hot yoga and high-intensity Pilates during pregnancy.*
- **Light house cleaning:** Includes time spent dusting, vacuuming, sweeping, or organizing.

Individuals who are experienced runners, bodybuilders, or cross-fitters should consult with their medical provider on safety during each individual pregnancy.

Any activity that causes discomfort during pregnancy should be discontinued.

Physical activity for postpartum

ACOG also shares tips for [Exercise After Pregnancy](#). They found that exercising can help improve mood, support weight maintenance and muscle strengthening, and promote sleep in the postpartum period. The recommendation includes a gradual return to former activity following the typical 6–8-week healing period after labor and delivery.

If delivery includes surgery or complications, encourage the participant to consult with their healthcare provider before beginning to exercise.

Safe postpartum activity

- **Walking:** Slowly pick up the pace and lengthen the intervals.
- **Jogging or running:** Start slowly and increase time and speed as comfortable.

- **Swimming:** Water sports continue to support the body; ramp it up with swimming laps.
- **Biking:** Continue biking with a helmet; try taking it off-road on one of the many local bike paths.
- **Heavy House Cleaning:** Moving to clean behind furniture, washing floors/walls, or trash removal.

Discussion activity with participants

When discussing time, encourage starting slow and focus on the benefits of getting any amount of physical activity. The 150 minutes may be spread throughout the week in various intervals; some examples include:

- 30 minutes each for 5 days.
- 20 minutes each for 3 days and 45 minutes on 2 days.
- 10 minutes at a time, multiple times a day, to exercise as able.

It isn't important how much or how often or even doing a specific exercise. The goal is to be active. We can support participants by praising any movement. We can share what counts as an activity and the tools they may use to support movement in a way that fits into their lifestyle.

Resources for families

- MN WIC Nutrition education cards: [Health Tips for Pregnant Women \(PDF\)](#) and [Stay Healthy \(PDF\)](#).
- [Pregnant & Postpartum Activity: An Overview](#)- Includes recommendations and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - [Active People, Healthy NationSM](#) is the CDC's national initiative to help Americans become more physically active.
- The [Move Your Way[®] Community Resources](#) was created by the [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#) (ODPHP) to enhance the evidence-based guidance provided in the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition](#). The campaign is designed to offer resources to help people live healthier lives, encouraging them to get moving and stay active!
 - [Materials for During and After Pregnancy](#)- fact sheets, videos, interactive tools, and posters that may be shared with participants in English or Spanish.
 - [Move Your Way: Pregnancy Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Move Your Way: Postpartum Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Free or Discounted Programs for Families](#)- Dakota County WIC shares free resources that families can access when they are on WIC to get them out and moving!

Reference – complete listing of hyperlinks:

[Physical Activity Guideline for Americans, 2nd Edition](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)

(https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)

[Exercise During Pregnancy](https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy) (<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-during-pregnancy>)

[Exercise After Pregnancy](https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-after-pregnancy) (<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/exercise-after-pregnancy>)

[Health Tips for Pregnant Women](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pghealthtips.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pghealthtips.pdf>)

[Stay Healthy](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf>)

[Pregnant & Postpartum Activity: An Overview](https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/healthy-pregnant-or-postpartum-women.html#:~:text=The%20guidelines%20recommend:%20*%20Getting%20at%20least,your%20mood%20throughout%20pregnancy%20and%20after%20birth) (https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/healthy-pregnant-or-postpartum-women.html#:~:text=The%20guidelines%20recommend:%20*%20Getting%20at%20least,your%20mood%20throughout%20pregnancy%20and%20after%20birth)

[Active People, Healthy NationSM](https://www.cdc.gov/active-people-healthy-nation/php/about/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/active-people-healthy-nation/php/about/index.html>)

[Move Your Way[®] Community Resources](https://health.gov/our-work/physical-activity/move-your-way-campaign) (<https://health.gov/our-work/physical-activity/move-your-way-campaign>)

[Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](https://odphp.health.gov/) (<https://odphp.health.gov/>)

[Materials for During and After Pregnancy](https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/move-your-way-community-resources/campaign-materials/materials-during-and-after-pregnancy) (<https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/move-your-way-community-resources/campaign-materials/materials-during-and-after-pregnancy>)

[Move Your Way: Pregnancy Fact Sheet](https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/MYW_MH_Pregnant_FS.pdf) (https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/MYW_MH_Pregnant_FS.pdf)

[Move Your Way: Postpartum Fact Sheet](https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/MYW_MH_Postpartum_FS.pdf) (https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/MYW_MH_Postpartum_FS.pdf)

[Free or Discounted Programs for Families](https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/HealthFamily/HealthServices/WIC/Documents/FreeDiscountedPrograms.pdf)

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Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL, MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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