

BENEFITS FOR MOM AND BABY!

PRENATAL LIFESTYLE EXPERT, AMY GRIFFITH, DEBUNKS MYTHS AND FEARS, PROVIDES TIPS, TECHNIQUES, AND TRUTHS TO HELP WOMEN HAVE A FIT, HEALTHY AND HAPPY PREGNANCY **BY AMY GRIFFITH**

Prenatal fitness

BENEFITS MOM & CHILD

Exercise during pregnancy is not only imperative to keep a mom-to-be fit and healthy, but it can also benefit the child's lifelong health. This is according to recent research from the University of Virginia School of Medicine, which determined that exercise during pregnancy has a distinct molecular consequence on the unborn child that essentially allows the child to be more fit.

Other studies have shown that maintaining a healthy weight during pregnancy is tied to preventing childhood obesity, which has reached epidemic proportions in many countries, including the US. Of course, prenatal fitness is also an imperative for the budding mom's own health with respect to both her physical and emotional well-being.

That said, while most understand that maintaining a pregnancy fitness regimen is beneficial, many women harbour erroneous fears and misconceptions about prenatal

exercise or simply don't know the best way to go about integrating fitness into their daily lifestyles—both of which undermine and inhibit a pregnant woman's opportunity to optimise her health and fully enjoy the experience.

To help moms-to-be (with no applicable medical complications) gain expert-based knowledge and innate confidence relating to their fitness choices, below prenatal lifestyle expert, Amy Griffith—star of the Prenatal Yoga Workout DVD—offers eight tips and truths to give direction, debunk myths, and provide overall peace-of-mind to foster a fit, healthy and happy nine months*:

EXERCISE TO RELEASE ENDORPHINS

Exercise not only has countless physical benefits, with keeping muscles toned, maintaining healthy body fat levels, and improving cardiovascular health among them, it also releases endorphins that can help boost mood, improve self-esteem, reduce anxiety and depression, decrease stress, alleviate pain and improve sleep. All of these can greatly enhance the lifestyle of a pregnant woman, helping her to enjoy the overall experience.

Ab exercises

Pregnant women still have abs and will benefit from strengthening them ahead of their delivery date.

Exercising abs and the entire group of core muscles will help prevent back and posture problems caused by the growing stomach, will make pushing more effective during labour, and will help the new mother recover quicker. For example, a pregnant mother in her second and third trimester will mainly be working her transverse abdominus, which wrap from front to back like a corset, as well as the obliques. Keeping these muscles toned and active will help them to return to their pre-pregnancy state far sooner.

Abdominal exercises during pregnancy can also reduce the risk of abdominal separation, which can lead to other physical ailments. Beforehand, be sure to research the safest types of abdominal exercise for the various trimesters and execute them with proper form.

ABDOMINAL BRACING

Note: Never perform abdominal crunches in a supine position in your third trimester. An alternative is to perform the abdominal bracing move: Suck your tummy in towards your spine. Hold for 6 counts and relax for 2 counts. Repeat.

CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE IS OKAY

The old theory of not allowing your heart rate to exceed 140 beats per minute is no longer supported by the medical community. There is about a 50% increase in blood flow when a woman is pregnant, so the heart works much harder to deliver all of these nutrients throughout the body, especially to the placenta. While a pregnant woman who is exercising may tire out more quickly, there is no evidence that such exertion is harmful to her baby. The general rule of thumb is if a pregnant woman can continue to hold a conversation while performing an exercise routine, then she is in a cardiovascular safe zone.

SET A FITNESS MANTRA

A mantra is a positive intention – a word or phrase that you come back to daily to 'check in' and be reminded that everything is okay and on course. Setting a mantra will help you to trust your body, and accept the changes that are occurring physically. It can also help to quiet down the ego and encourage you to slow down and even accept the temporary fitness limitations. This is a key lesson to reiterate throughout pregnancy and can help to keep the pregnant woman safe while exercising. Some mantras are, "I accept," "I trust," and "I am strong". These positive reminders carry throughout the pregnancy and the birth of the baby.



Try yoga

If you successfully conceive then it is important to follow all the basic pre-pregnancy measures in addition to the following:

Yoga is not just about gaining strength and flexibility, and finding calm in moments of stress; it also helps slow down our busy lives. Prenatal yoga is also a very safe form of exercise. Executed with the use of props to support the pregnant woman as baby grows, the mother can maintain the standard yoga poses,

but in a modified way. Prenatal yoga also teaches the powerful connection of breath and movement, encouraging the woman to let go of tension trigger points in her body. All of these elements combine to cultivate a deeper understanding of how the woman's body moves and what she can do to relax in

an uncomfortable situation, both physically and mentally. Many of the elements of a prenatal yoga class can be used by the mother as she moves through labour and delivery, including poses to ease labour pains, breathing techniques, and meditation.

MEDITATING CAN CONNECT TO A MANTRA YOU SET OR SIMPLY HELP TO QUIET DOWN, CLEAR YOUR MIND, CALM YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND LOWER YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE.

Find calm in moments of stress.



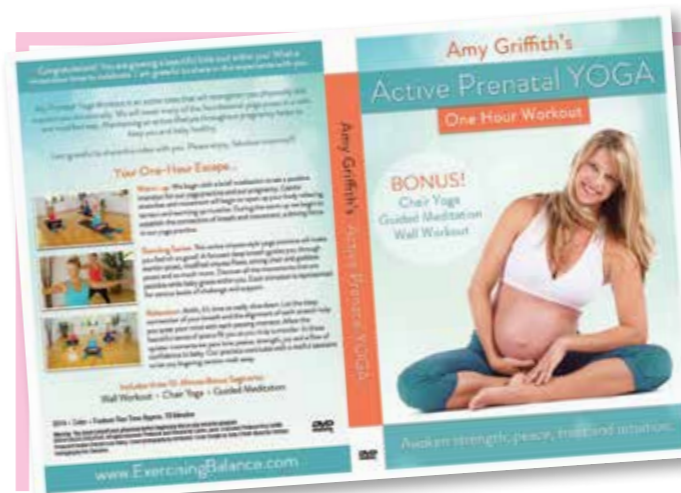
Meditate to de-stress

When employed in combination with a fitness regimen, a pregnant woman can reap the rewards of both physical and emotional health. Pregnant women can quiet down fears and release them through the practice of meditation. When the mother lets go of fear it opens her up to having a positive pregnancy and birth. Labour and

delivery are certainly a physical experience, but many women say it is 90% mental. Allowing oneself to move inward and 'step out of your own way' gives the body permission to do exactly what it knows how to do: birth baby! Meditation enables the mom-to-be to mentally surrender while exercise gives her physical strength and confidence.

MASSAGE TO RECOVER FASTER

A carefully delivered massage from a prenatal massage specialist can alleviate pain in various parts of the body that can be caused by too much physical activity – exercise and otherwise. Massage stretches and loosens muscles that become tight as baby grows and the as the woman's body changes. Massage will also benefit the pregnant woman as it relieves tension. A pregnant woman's low back pain, headaches, sciatica and swelling can all be eased by a trained massage therapist. When her body feels better she is able to continue to keep herself healthy with regular exercise.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Nationally certified Prenatal Yoga Instructor, Amy Griffith, is one of America's leading prenatal fitness and lifestyle experts. From www.AmyGriffithworkout.com, she provides free advice, including eBook and video content, to her army of followers and fans. As a former professional dancer Amy has spent her entire adult life devoted to fitness and healthy living. After getting married and deciding to focus on becoming a mother, Amy wanted to find the best strategies to ensure a healthy pregnancy. None of her friends had any answers besides generic recycled advice, so Amy embarked upon a crusade in the interest of herself, her unborn son and her family at large. What Amy discovered was that Yoga had amazing solutions and that she could teach other moms-to-be to trust their body more on what it can do naturally. She went on to study at Sonic, Center for Yoga Studies, and The Prenatal Yoga Center in New York City. After completing her studies Amy has been combining the experiences she's had as a dancer and student of two of the top yoga institutes with the swagger she picked up in the 'big apple' to teach a dynamic prenatal fitness class. Amy not only offers physical motivation for her students, but she also inspires them mentally and supports them emotionally. Amy's newest venture is her new fitness video that offers a safe, well-structured physical workout for expectant mothers. Learn more online at www.AmyGriffithworkout.com.



*The above should not be construed as medical advice. Individuals should consult with their own physicians before starting any fitness or exercise regimen.