WHAT'S SAFE IN PREGNANCY: EXERCISE & PELVIC FLOOR FAQS

Are you confused by the overwhelm of information online about what is and isn't safe in Pregnancy? Here are some of my top tips and answers to common questions that I get asked as a pelvic floor physio, yoga and pilates instructor.

Can I lay on my back to exercise?
Yes, it is safe to exercise laying on your back throughout pregnancy for short periods of time. While there isn't a universally agreed-upon time limit, I suggest limiting it to no more than 10 minutes or changing position when symptoms arise. Australian guidelines advise that after 28 weeks, exercises typically performed on your back for long periods should be modified by tilting the upper body on an angle or by performing them on your side. For yoga, consider using a bolster or laying on your side for Savasana. In reformer pilates consider using a prenatal wedge for long sequences on your back and in mat pilates break up periods of laying on your back with sidelying exercises.

When is it no longer safe to lay on my stomach?
Lying on your stomach is not inherently dangerous during pregnancy. The baby is well-protected within the uterus and amniotic fluid. In early pregnancy women can feel reassured that it is safe to do so and as the pregnancy progresses and it starts to become less comfortable you can modify position.

When should I start pelvic floor exercises?
Before starting your pelvic floor exercises in pregnancy I recommend an assessment with a pelvic floor physio to identify whether your pelvic floor is over-active or under-active and if you can correctly isolate these muscles. Many women are unaware of how to properly contract and relax and isolate these muscles. Our pregnancy consults includes an internal pelvic floor assessment and tailored exercises. Recommended sometime between 12-20 weeks!

PREGNANCY CONSULT

Includes:

- Pelvic floor and abdominal assessment
- Advice and treatment of back or pelvic pain
- Receive access to our app with prenatal yoga and pilates classes, pelvic floor exercises and more!
- Join our dedicated pre & postnatal studio in Maroochydore

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What core exercises are safe?
It has long been feared that doing crunches or ab exercises during pregnancy may be unsafe or could worsen ab separation. However, new research highlights that it is safe to train the abdominal muscles during pregnancy and doing so can actually improve birth outcomes, reduce back and pelvic pain and improve postpartum recovery. When it comes to core training in pregnancy, an individual approach is essential. Here are my top tips:

- Regress, Don't Avoid
  - If you're in your third trimester or have lower baseline core strength, you may need to scale certain exercises but that doesn't mean avoiding them altogether. Focus on breath control, and choosing variations that feel good in your body
- Use the acronym BAD to guide whether an exercise needs to be modified:
  - **B** – Breath holding: Are you unintentionally holding your breath?
  - **A** – Adaptive strategies: Are you gripping, bracing, or overusing other muscles like your hip flexors or neck?
  - **D** – Discomfort: Is there pain or does it not feel right?
  - If any of these are present, it's time to regress the movement or try a variation that feels better for your body.
- Our pregnancy consult includes assessment of technique and doming during abdominal exercises and tailored advice for group classes