

# PREGNANCY GUIDE- WORKING OUT THROUGH TRIMESTERS 1-4



WELL SPINE FAMILY CHIROPRACTIC

# WELCOME TO YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING PREGNANCY AND FITNESS!

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Our goal for this guide is to provide mommas and anyone working with mommas with information, resources and decision making skills needed to make educated choices about their individual pregnancies and exercise routines/ goals.

Now, to clarify, this is an ever changing field as it has finally gained a fair bit of well deserved attention. Anything written in this fun little guide should be IN ADDITION to and NOT IN PLACE OF individual care and evaluation. Now that that's all out of the way, let's get to the fun bits!

## FUN FACTS:

Every pregnant woman WILL develop diastasis recti by their 36th week.  
THIS. IS. NORMAL.

Peeing, Pressure, Pain and Coning/ Doming are all signs that we might need to adjust what we're doing OR how we are doing it.

You CAN continue to lift weights during pregnancy.  
-barring any complications and as directed by your provider.

Your intensity should be dictated by your ability to carry on a conversation (a few words at a time) not a specific heart rate.

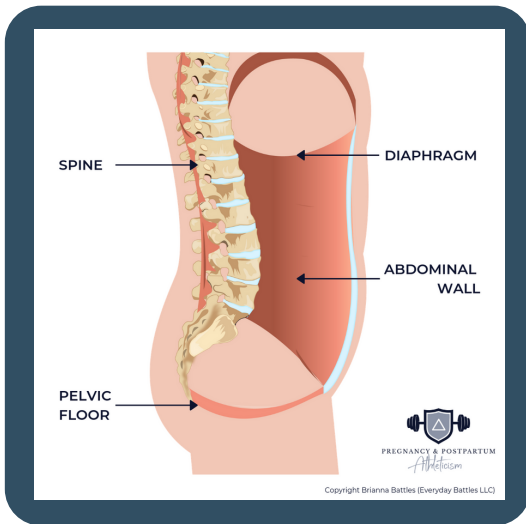
Every person, EVERY PREGNANCY and postpartum journey will be DIFFERENT.

Working out (in general, but especially during pregnancy) should leave you feeling better, NOT nauseous, exhausted, etc...

## INDEX

CORE 101	PAGE # 3
WHAT CHANGES DURING PREGNANCY	PAGE # 4
TRIMESTER 1	PAGE # 5
TRIMESTER 2	PAGE # 6
TRIMESTER 3	PAGE # 7
TRIMESTER 4	PAGE # 8
LIST OF MODIFICATION IDEAS	PAGE # 9

# Core 101



So, we can't properly chat pregnancy without dedicating an entire page to the importance of breathing and core/ pelvic floor!

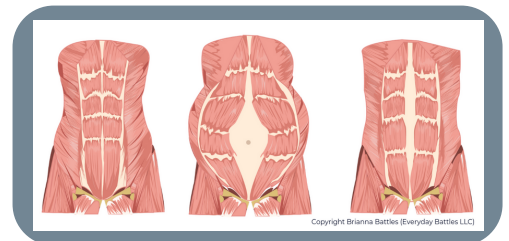
Think of the core as having four sides:  
top (diaphragm)  
bottom (pelvic floor)  
front (abdominal wall)  
back (the stabilizer muscles of the back)

...These sides all work together to manage pressures within the abdomen. If there is a weakness in one side, the pressure will go to area of least resistance. Think of a filled balloon; if you squeeze one side of the balloon... where does the pressure go? You got it- to the other side.

Managing pressures can help to avoid forces going into the:  
Front: possible increased diastasis  
Back: possible disc issues  
Top: possible hernias/ acid reflux  
Bottom: possible pelvic floor concerns

During pregnancy, the belly grows forward. This drops the pelvis forward and creates more tension in the low back. Remember the balloon? This shifting forward can also push pressures forward into the abdomen. The angle of the ribs also expands from 68\* to 103\* to accommodate a growing little! The rectus abdominis muscles (the "six/eight pack") attach here and are not only being pushed outward due to baby taking up real estate in front, but also being pulled outward from the top as those ribs expand. This causes the distance between those rectus abdominis muscles to become greater and places stress on the connective tissue between them.

*This is known as*  
**DIASTASIS RECTI**



Our goal during pregnancy is to manage pressures within the abdomen to try to keep them dispersed as evenly as possible. However, we can't do everything 100% correctly 100% of the time. This guide is meant to INFORM mommas about how their body is changing, why they might be experiencing the things that they are. We also cover how you modify breathing, bracing or positional factors to help. There is no one size fits all, so we stress that everyone will be different, but we want to modify how we do things and train in a way that SUPPORTS our changing bodies and naturally puts us into a position that allows us to handle pressures more appropriately.

# What Changes During Pregnancy?

Let's chat about the reasons why modifying workouts is important as pregnancy progresses...

## CHANGES IN OUR BODIES:

### Cardiovascular Changes:

- Increase in resting heart rate
- Vasodilation (vessels expand) due to hormone changes

### Respiratory Changes:

- The amount of air we take in and out of the lungs increases by as much as 48% in the first trimester
- The amount of air left in the lungs after exhaling is reduced, which leads to an increased feeling of needing a good breath
- The base of the rib's angle increases by nearly 30 degrees
- Less room for diaphragm to expand as it's pushed up close to 2 inches

### Biomechanical Changes:

- Growing belly = change in center of gravity
- Ligament laxity due to relaxin and progesterone
  - more so during certain periods
- There's an increased demand on the pelvic floor and anterior (front) core as the pelvis tilts forward and abdomen grows.
- There's increased tension in glutes, muscles of the low back and hip flexors

## CHANGES IN TRAINING:

### Change In GOALS and EXPECTATIONS

### Focus Shifts To Mental Strength For Birth Process

### Shift In Areas of Concentration:

- More focus on hip stability
- More *functional* core work
  - ex. loaded carries vs sit-ups
- More focus on breathing/ stabilizing techniques
  - piston breath vs breath holding
- Less focus on flexibility and more on stability
  - stretching vs strength/stability
- Less intensity/ high impact
- More focus on ability to engage core and stack hips with overhead position, holding an object in front of you, etc..





# First Trimester

1

## **Working ON: Core/Pelvic Floor Strategies**

While the pelvic floor isn't a main concern or focus in the first trimester, we still like to start working with the -connection breath- during warm ups and with light loads (under 70-80% of max). The goal is to begin developing breathing and bracing strategies that are supportive to the pelvic floor early. If you have any concerns such as known prolapse, incontinence, diastasis, etc. this is a great time to start working on strategies that work for you!

2

## **Working AROUND: Early Pregnancy Symptoms**

It's no secret that the first trimester can be accompanied by symptoms such as decreased energy, nausea and vomiting. Understanding and accepting that it's okay to skip a work out or rest when not feeling well is the main focus here! If the ability to consume adequate nutrition (or keeping it down) is a concern, please take this into consideration when determining the intensity of exercise.

3

## **Working WITH: MOST Pre-Pregnancy Exercises**

During the first trimester you can typically continue with the majority of your pre pregnancy exercises. You are also fine to start new activities- see exceptions below. We just don't recommend this as a time for competitions, extreme temperatures or starting up an intense training program to hit new PRs.

4

## **Working AWAY FROM: Contact/Risky Sport**

While it typically goes without saying, pregnancy is a contraindication for extreme or risky sports. If there is a likelihood of falling or increased risk of injury (ex. rope climbs, mountain biking, snowboarding, etc.) it's probably a good idea to find a safer activity. Hot yoga, saunas/ high heat are also activities we recommend subbing out.

# Second Trimester

1

## **Working ON: Breath Strategy and Managing Changing Pressures**

As belly starts to grow, so does the need to properly manage pressures. We begin focusing on performing a connection breath prior to the lift to help stabilize the core and finding what breathing patterns feel most supportive. That can be breathing in during the hard part and out during the easy part, breathing out through the entire movement, etc..

2

## **Working AROUND: A Growing Belly**

When you have to change your bar path to clear your belly, it's time to switch to dumbbells momma! Changing pressures in the belly as it grows also means that we should be checking to make sure we can manage our abdominal pressure well while performing the exercises we choose. If we notice doming or coning in the abdomen it might be a good idea to change up our breathing technique, load, intensity or maybe modify the movement.

3

## **Working WITH: Modified Load/Volume and Dumbbells**

During the second trimester we recommend looking at the frequency, intensity and loads of your activities and determining if that's what's best for you at this moment. You are a strong momma and we aren't saying switch to super light weights and only go for walks, but if you're noticing that you're feeling pressure, pain, discomfort or fatigue during or after your workouts, it might be time to scale back. This is DIFFERENT for everyone and every pregnancy! Try to stay at an intensity where you can continue to have a conversation

4

## **Working AWAY FROM: Olympic Lifting, High Impact, Gymnastic Movements and Breath Holding**

If Olympic lifting is really your jam, you can still do a snatch or clean. We just recommend switching to dumbbells or kettle bells so that you aren't changing your bar path because of a growing belly. At this point it's also recommended to move away from gymnastic movements such as toes to bar, muscle ups, etc. as well as high impact such as running or jump rope. We are also working away from the heavy lifts (70-80% or more) that require breath holding to help reduce extra pressure on the pelvic floor and abdominal wall. Lastly, this is also a great time to move away from core exercises such as sit ups. Maybe modify to weighted carries for a more functional core movement!

1

## **Working ON:** Exercising to Move and Feel Great

At this point many mommas typically don't feel like pushing themselves to the max to see juuuuust how hard they can workout or how many days they can go to the gym before absolutely NEEDING a rest day. However, just in case... here's a friendly reminder that by third trimester, mommas have a lot going on. Our goal is to focus on workouts that make you feel GREAT and maybe not so much on the ones that leave you feeling exhausted. Movements that help to relax the pelvic floor and open the pelvis are great to work on during this period.

2

## **Working AROUND:** Pressures On The Pelvic Floor/Abdominal Wall

Third trimester (or even in 2nd trimester) is when mommas will likely start to notice a bit more pressure along the abdominal wall (with signs such as coning or doming). Just remember that is TOTALLY normal and nothing to fear. Do we want to try avoid excessive pressures in this area? Sure. Should we change breathing, position or bracing techniques to help? Absolutely! At this point we also want to work on relaxing the pelvic floor.

3

## **Working WITH:** Continued Modified Load/Volume and Dumbbells and Pelvic Floor Relaxation

We recommend scaling back on weight, volume and intensity, if you haven't already. This is also a great time to really focus on "breathing low" into the pelvic floor throughout the day, after a workout, first thing in the morning or last thing before bed time to help the pelvic floor relax. Try exhaling through the entire exercise. This is also a GREAT time to establish care with a Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist.

4

## **Working AWAY FROM:** High Overhead Training Volume and Intense Ranges of Motion

As usual, everyone is different, but most mommas struggle to control their torso position all the way through pregnancy- ribs stacked over their hips when lifting over head. Especially at a high volume or weight. If this is the case, there are ways to modify such as doing single arm movements, sitting while performing the movement, staggering your stance or switching out the movement all together with something else. It can also be helpful to take a look at the depth of your exercises as ligament laxity increases. Now might not be the best time to stress your joints by doing a weighted, fully bottomed out, "ass to grass" squat or push through some deep yoga poses! Instead, try decreasing the range of motion to accommodate your changing body and working on other types of body work.



# Fourth Trimester

1

**Working ON:** Connection Breath, Light Mobility and REST.  
**>>> THEN Slowly Progressing Based Off of Individual Healing**

Our main focus in the postpartum period is rest and healing. We start with the connection breath to help bring awareness to the core and help with healing. We can also GENTLY mobilize and begin walking in SMALL spurts when ready. Especially in the beginning, a few shorter walks are going to be better than one long walk.

2

**Working AROUND:** Changes in the Core/Pelvic Floor, Demands of a Newborn and Fatigue

The postpartum period is all about trying to find the ability to connect with pelvic floor/core and heal. No matter the method of delivery, the body just did an INCREDIBLE thing and needs grace and time to heal. It is especially important that we are not comparing our journey to a previous pregnancy or especially other's pregnancies and timelines.

3

**Working WITH:** Breathwork > Bodyweight Exercises >> Added Weight  
**>>> THEN Intensity**

Finding a professional that works in this space is incredibly helpful at this time (a Chiro that specializes in Pregnancy/ Postpartum Rehab) to help you determine what's best for you! We love starting with the connection breath and progressing based off of: birth history, healing, activities of choice and current life demand! Other basics to start with include thoracic (mid back mobility) and working on proper hinging!

4

**Working AWAY FROM:** Anything That Causes Pain, Pressures, Peeing or Discomfort

The return to activity process is one that we want to pay special attention to. Anything that simply doesn't feel right- probably isn't. Making sure you are thoroughly evaluated IN ADDITION to your 6 week clearance through a Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist is helpful in SO many ways. Pain, pressure, peeing or discomfort are all signs that it's best to scale back and re-evaluate.

# COMMON LIFTING MODIFICATIONS

## General Recommendations:

**To modify:** Lower weight, lower volume, try changing your breathing and bracing patterns

**If difficulty overhead:** switch to one arm, seated or stagger stance

**If pain when on one leg:** Narrow your stance, avoid balancing on one leg

**See a professional specializing in pregnancy/postpartum rehab for specific care!**

Running	Rowing	Double Unders	Box Overs	Burpees
Sled pull/ push  Lunges  Bike	Drive from the legs and don't pull with the arms  Sled pull/ push	Box Step Ups + Weighted Carry  Lunges  ***Single Unders do not count as a SUB if impact is the issue***	Lateral Box Step Ups  Banded side walks  Barefoot calf raises (slow movement down)	Squat or Lunge + Knee Push Up  Elevated Push Up  Chest Press
Toes To Bar	Kipping/ Butterfly Pull Ups	Handstand Push Ups	Planks	Push Ups
Banded Lat Pull down + Lunge  Dumbbell Row+ Squat  Weighted Carry + Bird Dog	Elevated Ring Row  Assisted Pull Up  Banded Pull Downs	Dumbbell Overhead Press  Banded Overhead Press (wrapped under feet)	Pallof Press  Weighted Carry Suitcase, Farmers, or Front Rack  Dead Bug	Chest Press  Knee Push Up  Elevated Push Up • Try to keep hip flexors out of it
Snatch	Deadlifts	Shoulder To Overhead	Cleans	Squats
Dumbbell Snatch  Deadlift + DB/KB Shoulder to Overhead	DB or PVC Pipe Hip Hinges  Lunges  Kneeling Hip Hinge  Banded Glute Bridge	Dumbbell Shoulder to Overhead Staggered Stance Single Arm  Banded Overhead Press (wrapped under feet)  IYTWLs	Dumbbell Clean  DB or KB Deadlift + Panda Pull	Lower Weight  Box Squat  Change Up Stance Width

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Thanks for hanging out with us for a bit! Have any questions? Reach out through any of the contact points below to set up a time to chat. We LOVE this stuff and would love to help!

Cheers,

Well Spine Crew



Now for all the FUN Stuff!  
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