

Pregnancy Exercises

The 2019 Canadian Guideline for Exercise in Pregnancy recommends doing strengthening exercises twice a week during your pregnancy.

If you are already in the habit of performing strengthening exercises, then please continue. Ask your pregnancy care provider if you have questions about the safety of your program.

If you are not in the habit of performing strengthening exercises, this handout is a good guide for how to get started. All of these exercises can be performed at home. These are suggestions; there are many other exercises that are also safe in pregnancy. The handout suggests 3 sets of 10 repetitions of each exercise. Work up to this goal. Stretchy bands are used in these demos, but weights/dumbbells can also be used.

Squat

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture, feet are shoulder width apart

Execution:

- Perform a squat by bending at the hip. Push your bottom backwards like you will sit in a chair.
- Your knees should not be further forward than your toes. Make sure you can see your toes at the bottom of the squat.
- Stop at the point where you cannot keep your lower back flat, usually about 1/4 of the way.
- Rise up by pushing through the heels



Knees aligned over toes



Bend at the hip, back flat

Option: Partial Squat (Wall)

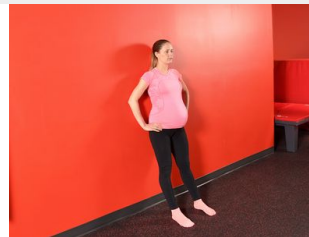
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

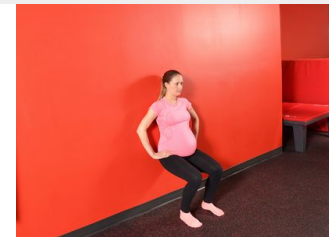
- Stand with back against wall
- Feet away from the wall

Execution:

- Do a mini-squat keeping back against the wall



Back touching wall, feet away from wall shoulder width apart



Partial squat

Hip Abduction (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Stand with band around ankle as shown

Execution:

- Bring leg out to the side by contracting the bottom/glute muscle. Doesn't have to be a big lift.
- Keep the toes pointing forward. Do not let the toes drift outward.
- Keep your upper body quiet (don't lean over)



Start Position



Bring leg out to the side

Knee Flexion (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Attach band to ankle and to a fixed object at the other end
- Sit on a ball or chair with good posture

Execution:

- Curl knee against resistance



Start position



Curl knee against resistance

Four Point Trunk Flexion + Extension

Sets: 1 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Start on hands and knees

Execution:

- Arch your back up to the ceiling as high as you comfortably can
- Arch your back the opposite direction as low as you comfortably can



Start on all fours



Arch Down



Arch up

Four Point + Arm and Leg Raise

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Start on hands and knees, hips and shoulders at 90°

Execution:

- Lift one arm straight out front
- At the same time, lift the opposite leg straight back. Lift slowly.
- Keep the back as stable and flat as you can, like a tabletop. Avoid tilting. Imagine a glass of water balancing on your back - don't spill!
- If it's too difficult, modify by lifting only one limb at a time



Start Position



Lift one arm straight out front and leg straight back

Push Up | Knees

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- All fours position. Lower your hips forward until your body is straight
- Engage core, squeeze gluts.

Execution:

- Imagine your body is a solid plank of wood. Push-up onto knees, without sagging.
- On the way back down, come as low as your belly allows.
- As belly gets bigger, use a counter top or a wall instead

Important:

- Keep hips and back straight.
- Keep chin tucked.



Start Position



Push up on knees

Scapular Retraction

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Sit or stand with good posture
- May be helpful to stand against a wall to feel the movement
- Once you are comfortable with this, do it everywhere (ie in the car, sitting at desk, while typing etc)

Execution:

- Use the muscles between your shoulder blades to pull them together and slightly downward
- Be sure not to pull them together using your shrugging muscles (ie shoulders should stay down)
- Relax and repeat



Stand tall with shoulders relaxed



Use muscles to squeeze your shoulder blades together and slightly downward; Head stays still

Bicep Curl (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Sit or stand with your arm at your side
- Hold a band in your hand

Execution:

- Bend your elbow up towards your chest
- Return to the start position



Hold band, palm up



Bend elbow up

Triceps: Elbow Extension | Single Arm Overhead (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Sit or stand with good posture, feet shoulder width apart
- Hold band behind back as shown

Execution:

- Straighten elbow, pressing against resistance. Keep elbow facing forward.
- Returning to the start position in a controlled manner



Start Position



Straighten elbow

Shoulder side arm raise | Mid Range (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture
- Gently bring shoulder blades together
- Be ready to raise your arm diagonally out to the side

Execution:

- Raise arm up diagonally out to the side to shoulder height.
- Lower arm back down to starting position



Start Position



Raise arm diagonally to shoulder height

Shoulder Press (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10

Preparation

- Anchor cable / tubing at floor level by standing on it
- Stand with good posture, feet shoulder width apart.
- Hold band at level of collarbone, elbows bent.

Execution

- Press arms straight up, toward ceiling.
- Slowly return to the start position.

Tips:



- Keep back straight. Do not lean under the resistance.



Start Position



Press arms overhead

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