

PRENATAL EXERCISES OB5

All prenatal exercises should begin around 16 weeks gestation and continue with increasing increments until labor and delivery. Some exercises will also be beneficial in supporting your muscles and uterus postpartum.

- **Pubococcygeous Muscle Activity (KEGELS)**: Helps maintain proper tone in the pelvic floor. Poor tone may cause: incontinence when laughing or sneezing; discomfort; lack of sensation during intercourse; unusual pain during birth; premature flexion of baby's head; prolonged second stage of labor; damage to the muscle; and feelings of pressure. The more children you have the more stress is placed on this muscle; therefore, more importance must be stressed over strengthening it!
 - 16-20 weeks** – 50 times per day (Do them while washing dishes or brushing your teeth, or just before bedtime. But do them faithfully. It is especially helpful to tighten and loosen them during intercourse.)
 - 20-24 weeks** – 100 times per day
 - 24-28 weeks** – 150 times per day
 - 28-32 weeks** – 150 times per day, but you must hold each one for 2 seconds, then release.
 - 32-34 weeks** – 200 times per day, but you must hold each one for 3 seconds, then release.
 - 34-Labor** – 200 times per day, but you must do them in 3 steps. Begin hold, make it tighter, and make it as tight as you can. Then release in 3 steps, loosen slightly, loosen a bit more, completely relax.
 - Postpartum** – 100 times per day, until you can easily stop your urine completely midstream. (Do not practice stopping urine regularly, as you don't want to end up with an infection.)
- **Tailor Sitting**: This is like sitting Indian style with legs crossed. It encourages the uterus to move forward, increasing circulation and stretching the inner thighs. Begin with short intervals sitting in this manor and gradually increase your time. Sit this way as often as you comfortably can.
- **Butterfly**: This exercise tones and conditions abductor muscles and helps to reduce shaking of legs and unnecessary pain after the birth. Sit on the floor and lean back against something with knees up and feet together. Your husband places the flats of his hands or forearms on your knees and applies resistance while you try and open your legs. Only apply resistance while legs are going down, and only take the legs down as far as is comfortable. This is a powerful exercise.
- **Walking**: To promote good circulation and to shorten total laboring time, walking 1 to 2 miles daily is the answer. Be sure the walk is brisk and that you use comfortable walking shoes. Do not walk during times when you may overheat, try to walk when it is cool, and always have plenty of water to keep yourself well hydrated.
- **Squatting**: Squatting gets the body in natural alignment to put pressure on the uterus, to prevent arching of the back (which interferes with pushing), to shorten the birth canal, and to increase the outlet of the pelvis by more than 18%! It generally shortens second stage of labor. It also helps to prepare the leg muscles and is very important in the preparation of the perineum. You start by standing straight with legs comfortably apart. Bend knees slightly and tuck hips under. Then bend forward (to keep uterus forward) and squat, keeping heels on the floor. Your back will be straight angling slightly forward. When coming up, bring rear up half way, and then use your hands on your legs to support yourself when straightening up the rest of the way. If you are doing it correctly, it will take you about 10 minutes to do 10 squats, perhaps a bit longer. Follow the time, not the number of times you squat, as you will need to hold the squatting position as long as you comfortably can.
 - 16-28 weeks** – Squat for approximately 30 minutes each day.
 - 28-36 weeks** – Squat for approximately 1 hour daily.
 - 36-labor** – Squat for approximately 2 hours daily. If you have Braxton Hicks, you can practice for labor by squatting through each contraction. As you feel your tummy tighten, squat, stay there while it is tight, then slowly get up. You may use a bed, or countertop to help support your weight while doing this.
 - Laboring** – For as long as you are able, squat through every contraction. Make an effort to squat on a birthing stool or using a squatting bar for second stage delivery.

- **Pelvic Rocks:** This exercise probably produces more benefits than any of the others. It tones and conditions the muscles of the lower back and abdominal muscles, it relieves pressure (on lower back, major blood vessels, ureters, and bladder), increases circulation, relieves general tension, and often improves digestion. When done properly, it helps the baby come forward, relieving pressure. Do these exercises often during the day. Don't try to do all your sets at once. Remember never to arch your back, even when your belly gets really heavy; keep that back nice and straight.

16-20 weeks – 10, 4 times each day, plus an additional 20 at bedtime.

20-28 weeks – 20, 4 times each day, plus an additional 40 at bedtime.

28-32 weeks – 30, 4 times each day, plus an additional 60 at bedtime.

32- Labor – 40, 4 times each day, plus an additional 80 at bedtime.