



Cycling during Pregnancy



Women often ask if it is safe to ride a bike when they are pregnant. It is now widely accepted by health authorities that regular physical activity is highly beneficial for mums-to-be.

According to Active & Pregnant, a guide produced by the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, a sensible pattern of exercise can help maintain wellbeing during the pregnancy, help prepare the body for labour and help in recovery from the birth.

Glenys Jansen, head midwife at the hospital, says that exercise such as cycling helps pregnant women feel good about themselves, and it might help control weight.

"The rate of diabetes in pregnancy is increasing dramatically," she says, "largely because more women are overweight. You're much less likely to get diabetes, and you're more able to control it if you're exercising regularly."

Some people worry that exercise could cause a miscarriage or damage to the baby, but there are no studies that have shown any negative effects of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise in a normal, healthy pregnancy.

"If you have complications, such as a multiple birth, or high blood pressure, you wouldn't do exercise," Glenys says, "Or you would only do it in consultation with a doctor and physiotherapist."

For women with normal pregnancies, moderate-intensity is the key. Fiona Cooper, health educator and former midwife recommends cycling to help women build up their endurance for labour, but cautions against riding too strenuously.

"Staying cool and maintaining the body's water balance is important - take a water bottle and ride at times where you're not out in the heat," Fiona says.

Some pregnant women who cycle find it is useful to raise the handlebars so that they are riding in a more upright position. During the later stages, many actually find it easier to ride than walk because the bicycle supports their weight.

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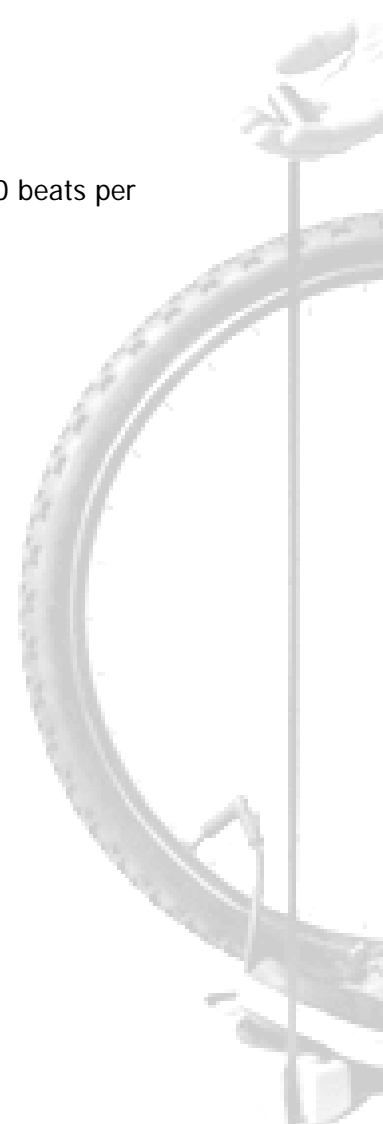
Glenys says that nausea can be quite debilitating. *"If you're feeling tired or you don't feel like exercising on a particular day, give it a rest. It's very physically demanding being pregnant,"* she advises.

The Active & Pregnant guide stresses that every pregnancy is different and that the pattern of exercise that works well for one person may not be the right one for someone else.

Choose an exercise regime that suits your own level of fitness and lifestyle.

Cycling precautions during pregnancy

- Avoid getting too hot
- Drink more water than usual
- Don't push yourself and use a heart monitor (pulse should not exceed 140 beats per minute)
- Don't get fatigued
- Don't exercise if you feel ill
- Stop if you get dizzy, feel pain, headaches or become short of breath.



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