



## Safety Precautions for Physical Activity During GDM

Next, let's think about your environment where you are completing your exercises. In Canada we have extreme temperatures. You want to avoid exercising in hot and humid weather and in cold conditions. So perhaps on hot days consider walking inside or stay in the shade or wear a wide brimmed hat. During cold temperatures, consider exercising indoors or if you are outside dress in layers and use footwear with good grip in icy or slippery conditions.

### **Changes in Your Body**

Now we will review some changes your body is experiencing and how that will require you to modify your exercises. During pregnancy, your joints may be looser than before. This means you should avoid overstretching, exercises that require rapid changes of direction, and activities that increase your risk of falling such as downhill skiing or soccer.

After your first trimester you also want to avoid exercises lying flat on your back as this can cause extra pressure on your back and reduce blood flow. You can still perform exercises to help strengthen your abdomen or belly area during pregnancy but make changes such as placing support at your lower back so that you are sitting at least at a 45 degree angle, doing the exercises on your side or from a seated position.

Another condition to be aware of is diastasis recti. It can be described as a gap or separation of the muscles on your abdomen. You can identify this condition by placing your fingers in the centre of your abdomen and noticing if you feel a separation that is greater than two fingers-width apart. You may also notice a bulging or a ripple at the centre of your abdomen. If this occurs, or even if you have any questions or concerns, stop any exercises for your abs and consult your healthcare provider.

### **How Intense?**

You want to make sure that you are breathing throughout your exercise routine and are not performing any exercises that you have to hold a position for a long period of time or heavy lifting that would lead you to holding your breath. Avoid overexertion. Think back to our intensity measures presented in video 2 – How are you feeling? Your exercise should only be somewhat hard, or 12-14 on a scale of 1-20. Can you continue talking? Maybe you cannot sing but you should be able to carry a conversation still without feeling short of breath. During pregnancy it is natural to feel tired. Know your body and how far you should push yourself. Avoid high intensity exercises, especially those that you are not familiar with.

Here are some reasons you should stop your exercises and consult your health care provider immediately;

- Any chest pain
- Painful uterine contractions
- Feeling dizzy or faint during or after exercise
- Any vaginal bleeding or gush of vaginal fluid.

Please also review the cautions and precautions we discussed in video one.

### **Let someone know**

It is a good idea to let someone know about your activity goals during pregnancy and about your gestational diabetes. By letting others around you know that you are pregnant, especially if you are using insulin, they can keep an eye out for you. This is particularly important if you do decide to join a gym. Let the staff know you have gestational diabetes and whether or not you are using insulin or other blood sugar lowering medication. They will most likely require a note from your healthcare provider before you start exercising there.

Physical activity including exercise during pregnancy can help you manage gestational diabetes. In fact, it can help prevent the need for insulin injections or reduce your dose. Every woman and every pregnancy is very different, so listen to your body and make any necessary changes. For example, maybe you feel tired in the evening so you can exercise in the morning. Maybe you prefer two short 15 minute walks instead of one 30 minute walk. Do what is best for you and fits with your schedule and preference. Keep your health care team informed. Keep an eye out for any signs that might require a reduction in your exercise or activity.

Keep these safety reminders in mind and of course consult your health care provider if you have any questions, or experience changes that you are worried about. Be safe and be as active as you can.