



## Getting Started

Have you considered exercise as medicine? Well, being physically active during pregnancy has many benefits. It can help you during your pregnancy but also improve the future health for both you and your baby. It is like a medicine for a healthy pregnancy and beyond.

### **Benefits of Physical Activity**

During pregnancy being physically active, can help you control your blood sugar levels. In fact, simply going for a walk and increasing your daily step counts has shown to reduce high blood sugars and this can help you manage your gestational diabetes. Being active will also help you regulate how much weight you gain. During pregnancy we want to see gradual, healthy weight gain and being active can help you achieve that. Appropriate weight gain and controlled blood sugars will help your baby grow at a healthy speed.

Being physically active and trying to add more steps into your day may also improve your energy level and mood. And that's not all: the benefits of physical activity go beyond your pregnancy and delivery. Research has shown that moms who are physically active during pregnancy and stay active after pregnancy have a lower chance of developing diabetes later in life. Their child's risk for diabetes also goes down. You may also be less likely to hang onto the extra weight you gain during pregnancy, a problem called postpartum weight retention. So now the question is, how do you get start getting active?

### **First Steps**

If you haven't already, start by visiting your health care provider to discuss being active during pregnancy. If you were active before your pregnancy this may mean making some changes to your previous routine. If you weren't, you can still start during pregnancy. You should tell your healthcare provider about the types of activities and exercises you did before pregnancy. You can then discuss your activity goals now that you are pregnant.

To guide these conversations, consider using the PARmedX for Pregnancy. The PARmedX is available for free online on the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology website, this link is also listed in the video description below. You will be asked to complete a series of questions that will help you and your health care provider decide on safe ways for you to be active, based on your previous activity levels, health history and current pregnancy. After you complete the first page, you and your healthcare provider will figure out if there are any reasons that may mean you cannot be active.

## Reasons to Limit Physical Activity

There are some things that will really prevent you from being active during pregnancy. They are not common but if you have any of these, your health care provider may put limits on your physical activity.

- Premature or early labour in a previous pregnancy.
- Early contractions and dilation in your pregnancy now.
- Ruptured your membranes ('broken water') early in your last pregnancy or in your pregnancy now.
- Bleeding from the vagina during pregnancy.
- *Placenta previa* is a reason to not be very active during pregnancy. Ask your health care provider about this.
- If your blood pressure cannot easily be brought under control or you have a complicated type of high blood pressure in pregnancy called *pre-eclampsia*,
- Weak cervix (called an *incompetent cervix*)
- If your baby is not growing well (intrauterine growth restriction)
- Carrying more than two babies (triplets or more)
- Any medical condition or disease that is not well controlled

Please discuss this with your doctor. Many of these conditions and possible problems are listed on the PARmedX form.

## Let's get started!

If your health care provider has given you the okay to exercise and lead an active lifestyle, you are ready to get started. Keep in mind, should you develop reasons not to be physically active later on during your pregnancy, like the problems we have mentioned, you should inform your health care provider and together you can re-evaluate your goals and routine.