

**Bun in The Oven, Muscles in the Making**

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Exercise in pregnancy is an important part of antepartal care that significantly improves maternal and infant health. The complications are less with moderate physical activity, including gestational diabetes, hypertension, and excess weight gain. Nurses play a crucial role in educating and counseling expecting mothers regarding the benefits of their supervised prenatal exercise (Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2020). This paper discusses in detail the importance of exercise during pregnancy, focusing on the nurse's role in promoting physical activity. It outlines the ways in which exercise increases physical strength, makes labor and recovery easier, and offers immediate and long-term health benefits for mothers and their infants. The risk of complications is reduced, thus enabling better prenatal and postnatal outcomes (Ussery et al., 2020). Exercise during pregnancy enhances patient center care by improving maternal physical health, reducing the risk of complications, and promoting mental wellbeing to support better outcomes for both mom and baby.

Evidence-based practice shows that regular, moderate exercise decreases pregnancy complications, improving maternal and infant health. The advantages of physical activity were observed to include the control of gestational diabetes, weight gain within limits, and a reduced incidence of hypertension (Bahri Khomami et al., 2021). In addition, physical exercise enhances cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and general well-being, which is necessary during a healthy pregnancy and childbirth. Tsakiridis et al. (2020) suggest at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. This guideline is based on various reviewed articles, which outline the favorable results of prenatal workouts. As care providers, nurses are in an apt position to teach and encourage pregnant women to engage in proper exercise during the entire period of pregnancy (WebMD, 2023). Nurses can support this by informing mothers of the benefits of exercising based on evidence-based information,

making sure an exercise program is individualized for each person's needs, and regarding physical activity as safe and effective throughout pregnancy.

Exercise is incredibly important for pregnant women, given that the benefits are numerous and directly affect both immediate and long-term health outcomes in mothers and their infants. Regular exercise throughout pregnancy has been associated with lower risks of preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and excessive weight gain. Klankhajhon and Sthien (2022) estimate that gestational diabetes affects approximately six to nine percent of pregnancies in America. These conditions predispose women to adverse outcomes such as macrosomia, increased cesarean delivery rates, and a higher risk of developing type two diabetes later in life. The risks of those conditions are mitigated by exercises that enhance insulin sensitivity, improve glucose metabolism, therefore reducing the incidence of gestational diabetes (Ribeiro et al., 2022). Exercise during pregnancy further results in shorter labors and reduced medical interventions such as cesarean sections and instrumental deliveries. This not only contributes to the mother in terms of recovery time and complications but also encourages better results for the infant.

The benefits of prenatal exercise do not stop at the physical health advantages but extend into improved mental health outcomes. Regular exercise has been identified as one of the factors that may decrease the risk for postpartum depression. With a prevalence of 10 to 15% of new mothers, it is likely to have long-lasting consequences for both the mother and the child (Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2020). This promising evidence base supporting these benefits underpins the incorporation of exercise within prenatal care. Appreciation of statistical evidence and long-term benefits may lead to better health providers' advocacy for exercise as a standard of care in prenatal services (Cooper & Yang, 2023). This improves health outcomes as it encourages the mother to take charge of her health and well-being, benefiting herself and her infant. This topic has massive implications that could eventually

lead to changes in prenatal care for improved health across pregnancy and the entirety of a woman and her child's life.

Nurses are often the primary contact for health care and can be the pregnant woman's first point of contact within the community. Consequently, nurses are strategically situated to impact maternal health behaviors and contribute to health improvement. The integration of evidence-based guidelines on prenatal exercise has completely changed the practice of nurses in terms of patient education and planning of care (Ussery et al., 2020). Therefore, nurses should have a broad understanding of safe exercises in pregnancy, contraindications, and modifications for each specific condition. This will provide them with a framework to properly advise their patients in an accurate and evidence-based manner and to clear some of the common misconceptions or myths that prevent them from conducting physical activity (Klankhajhon & Sthien, 2022). The study further highlighted that thorough assessments are also needed in determining proper exercise prescription, where attention to the pre-pregnancy fitness level, medical conditions, and complications in pregnancy must be considered.

It also goes beyond direct patient care, to interactions with interdisciplinary collaboration. These nurses collaborate closely with obstetricians, physiotherapists, exercise specialists, and other health professionals in formulating and implementing comprehensive care plans. This collaborative practice ensures that the pregnant woman receives consistent, evidence-based exercise counseling throughout her healthcare team (WebMD, 2023). Lastly, nurses are expected now to provide documentation of exercise counseling, monitoring of progress, and adjustment of recommendations throughout pregnancy. Nurses are supposed to develop a communication plan that emphasizes the benefits of exercising but at the same time allows cultural, social, and personal concerns that might limit their compliance with exercising. This involves resource provision, exercising demonstration, and goal setting with the assistance of mothers regarding realistic achievements (Ussery et al., 2020). They are

further supposed to be very instrumental in advocating for policy changes that promote exercise programs in prenatal settings and ensure access to opportunities for safe exercise.

Studies on exercising during pregnancy have brought a better understanding of the practice and its potential effects on pregnant women. It has consequently had an impact on patient care by guiding the development of comprehensive care plans that center on the health of mothers and infants. Hence, understanding the myriad benefits of exercise places healthcare professionals in a better position to ensure that expectant mothers are well-advised on various aspects of exercise (Tsakiridis et al., 2020). This will ensure that physical activities are varied yet safe and effective. The positive effects of a personalized approach include improvement of health outcomes and facilitation of health engagement, as mothers are supported throughout their health journey. Studies have shown time and again that women who receive recommendations and advice from health professionals tend to adopt pregnancy with regular physical activity (Ribeiro et al., 2022). This sets off a chain of health benefits, ranging from reduced risk of gestational diabetes and improved cardiovascular health to psychological well-being. In addition, regular physical exercise during pregnancy can ensure good labor duration outcomes and speed up the process of postpartum recovery.

Similarly, Cooper and Yang (2023) noted that barriers to exercise are a lack of time, motivation, or resources and thus need immediate attention. Identification of the barriers by health professionals will allow them to design ways to enable mothers to surmount the challenges and try to fit in exercises in everyday life. Such strategies involve flexible exercise options, motivational support, and connecting mothers to community resources and exercise programs. Adding exercise to prenatal care encourages a holistic approach to maternal health, which contributes to the overall health of mothers and their infants (Bahri Khomami et al., 2021). This calls for an active role in health because mothers become more involved in their

care, which results in improved adherence to exercise recommendations and better health outcomes.

Vigorous exercise during pregnancy is an important part of prenatal care, as any kind of activity or exercise can have a considerable influence on maternal and infant health. Physical activity has been documented to have many benefits, such as the reduction of complications, improved physical strength, and improved psychological functioning. Therefore, it is very pivotal for the nurses to encourage exercises, educate, and offer support to pregnant women to include physical activities throughout each day. It is about understanding the place of exercise and its effect on health outcomes. Healthcare professionals can extend their case by including exercise in prenatal care for better health outcomes in mothers and infants. This becomes necessary information for the application of evidence to nursing practices as this kind of knowledge provides a wide-based avenue for care planning that addresses health matters regarding mothers and infants. Current research and guidelines can help in providing the best available service to mothers by informing them about their health and well-being. The research during this time cannot be overemphasized as it draws upon a holistic approach to prenatal care through the implementation of exercise and well-being for the expecting mother.

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