

Importance of 'FUNCTIONAL FITNESS'

Functional fitness refers to how well your body copes with everyday activities such as hanging out washing, vacuuming and lifting children. It is important that all of us are functionally fit throughout our lives but, for women throughout pregnancy, it is extremely important to maintain functional fitness to avoid injury and back pain associated with the postural changes of pregnancy and the stresses of labour.

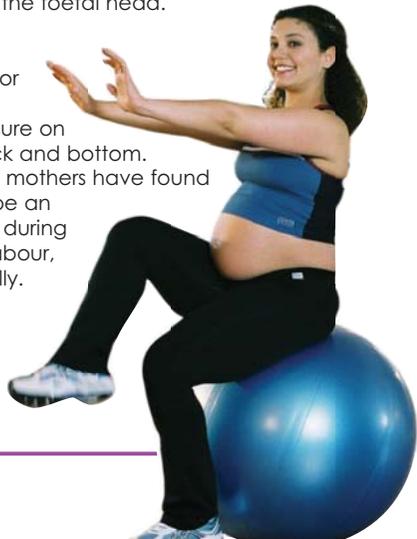
Balance and spinal stability are essential to functional fitness and require specific training to develop optimal performance. Regular exercise in an unstable environment is a great way of improving balance and stability and is also great fun!

Recent research has shown that regular exercise throughout pregnancy can assist in a faster labour and quicker recovery!

What happens when a labouring woman sits on a Swiss Ball? A Midwife answers:

Enhancing early labour through optimal foetal positioning in relation to the woman's pelvis and spine. The pelvic inlet is tilted forward, encouraging better positioning of the foetal head.

It is also comfortable for the woman, relieving pressure on the lower back and bottom. Midwives and mothers have found Swiss Balls to be an excellent tool during pregnancy, labour, and postnatally.



These great products will help you get on your way to a fitter, healthier pregnancy.

Designed by health professionals, these instructional products are available from selected retailers.



FitMum® is an interactive DVD providing the user with an overall wellness guide through pregnancy. Each segment is presented by an expert in the field and includes nutrition, birthing and a range of exercise programs (resistance, aerobic, relaxation and aqua segments) designed specifically for each stage of pregnancy. FitMum® allows you to select which exercise program or information you would like on any given day, you can even change the music to suit your mood and taste!

Preggi Bellies—Training for 2™ program is a 1 hour choreographed aerobic workout on the mediBall. Providing an all round cardiovascular and strength workout, Preggi Bellies is acclaimed to be the most successful pregnancy exercise program in Australia and has just been released on video & DVD! Suitable for women of all fitness levels from pre-pregnancy to delivery, this motivating workout will keep you fit and feeling great through your pregnancy.



Also available from AOK Health and selected retailers:

'Powering through Pregnancy' is an easy-to-use guide for women to ease discomfort during pregnancy. Exercises are included with instructions and illustrations of each one and an explanation of when each is suitable. The author of this fantastic book, Jane Simons is an obstetric Physiotherapist with extensive experience in private practice.



mediBall® Basics is an instructional program which includes over 35 exercises and stretching sequences that can be performed on a mediBall. Each exercise is demonstrated and explained to ensure you gain maximum benefit from your workout. Available in VHS and DVD format and is suitable for all ages and levels of fitness.

SOME EXERCISES ARE NOT SUITABLE DURING PREGNANCY

AOK™
The Power of Balance!

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GENTLE EXERCISE THROUGHOUT
Pregnancy
for a faster labour and quicker recovery!
for a faster labour and quicker recovery!
for a faster labour and quicker recovery!



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Benefits of exercising throughout PREGNANCY:

There are many myths about pregnant women exercising which stem from outdated information and old wives' tales but the truth is women who exercise throughout their pregnancy see huge benefits for themselves and their babies.

Recent research* has shown that women who exercise regularly during pregnancy experience:

- ◆ **35% decrease in the need for pain relief in labour**
- ◆ **75% decrease in the incidence of maternal exhaustion**

And Are:

- ◆ **50% less likely to be induced or to need an episiotomy**
- ◆ **75% less likely to need forceps or caesarean**

Exercise can also assist in:

- ◆ **Reducing weight gain**
- ◆ **Improving mood and sleep patterns**
- ◆ **Increasing rate of weight loss after the birth**
- ◆ **The prevention of illness such as gestational diabetes and post-natal depression.**

* James Clapp MD (Exercising Through Your Pregnancy, Addicus Books)

Which exercise TO CHOOSE?

You will need to make some changes to your normal fitness routine especially as pregnancy advances. And since every woman and every pregnancy is different it is also important to seek advice from your obstetrician or treating medical professional before embarking on a new exercise program. You should always choose an exercise program which has been designed specifically for pregnant women. Your fitness centre may operate classes to meet your changing needs or there are some great programs now available on video and DVD which you can do in the comfort of your own home when the mood takes you. See overleaf for some great alternatives.

The placentas of women who exercise regularly in early to mid pregnancy grow faster and function better than those who don't. Studies have also shown that exercise can assist in a faster labour.

How to avoid:

BACK PAIN Throughout Your Pregnancy

Due to postural changes and the stretching of abdominal muscles as the baby grows, more than 50% of pregnant women experience back pain, especially in the third trimester. Training of the core abdominal muscles will greatly reduce the risk of back pain and injury during childbirth. An unstable platform such as the mediBall Pro is an ideal environment for training the core stabilisers and maintaining functional fitness.

Exercise Tips

- ◆ **ALWAYS** re-hydrate throughout your workout
- ◆ **ALWAYS** use exercise programs designed specifically for pregnancy
- ◆ **ALWAYS** seek advice from your obstetrician or health practitioner before embarking on a new program
- ◆ **AVOID** jerky or extreme movements
- ◆ **AVOID** hot, humid environments
- ◆ Exercise **REGULARLY** i.e. about 3 times per week for best results
- ◆ **DO NOT** exercise to the point of exhaustion



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