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EXERCISE GUIDELINES for PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM

PREGNANCY ONLY:

Exercise may help prevent gestational diabetes and postpartum depression.

Participation in recreational sports with high potential for contact or falling should be avoided.

No exercise should be performed in the supine (lying on your back) position after the 4th month of gestation is complete.

Exercises that employ the Valsalva maneuver (bearing down as if to have a bowel movement) should be avoided.

Caloric intake should be adequate to meet not only the extra energy needs of pregnancy, but also for the exercise performed.

Maternal core temperature should not exceed 100+°F.

PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM

Regular exercise (at least 3 times per week) is preferable to intermittent activity. Competitive activities should be discouraged.

Vigorous exercise should not be performed in hot, humid weather, or during illness with fever.

Brisk bouncing movements should be avoided. Exercise should be done on a wooden floor or a tightly carpeted surface to reduce shock and provide sure footing.

Deep flexion or extension of joints should be avoided because of connective tissue laxity. Activities that require jumping, jarring motions, or rapid changes in direction should be avoided.

Vigorous exercise should be preceded by a 5 minute warm-up, such as slow walking or stationary cycling with low resistance.

Vigorous exercise should be followed by a 5-minute cool-down that includes gentle stationary stretching. Because connective tissue laxity increases the risk of joint injury, stretches should not be taken to the point of maximum resistance.

Care should be taken to rise gradually from the floor to avoid a drop in blood pressure. Some form of activity involving the legs should be continued for a brief period, such as walking.

Liquids should be taken liberally before and after exercise to prevent dehydration. If necessary, activity should be interrupted to replenish fluids.

Women who have been sedentary should begin with a physical activity of very low intensity and advance activity levels very gradually. Activity should be stopped and the physician consulted if any unusual symptoms appear.