

Pregnancy exercises and stretches

The following exercises and stretches will help to strengthen and stabilize (provide support) for the low back and the abdominal/pelvic core as well as help with other pregnancy related issues such as leg cramps:

Pelvic Tilt:

1. Lie with your back and head flat against the floor with your knees bent and feet flat against the floor
2. Press your torso and upper back into the floor.
3. Squeeze your buttocks together tightly and lift you bottom up as high as possible
4. Feel the stretch in the **back** of your thighs, your **lower** abdomen, the **lower** back, and the buttocks.
5. **Inhale** (breathe in) through the nose and **exhale** (breathe out) through your mouth, as you complete this stretch.
6. Hold the stretch for a count of 10, working up to a count of 30.
7. **Slowly** lower your buttocks to the floor.



Trunk Stability:

1. Kneel on the floor placing your hands in front of you on the floor shoulder width apart.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles and extend your **left** leg straight out behind you as shown.
3. Feel the pull in your **abdomen** and low **back**.
4. **Inhale** (breathe in) through your nose and **exhale** (breathe out through your mouth) as you keep your leg extended for a count of 10.
5. Slowly lower your leg to the floor back into the kneeling position and repeat with the **right** leg.



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Hip Abduction:

1. Lie on the floor on your **left** side, resting your head on your arm as shown or placing a pillow under your head for support
2. While bending your **left** knee, lift your **right** leg and hold for a count of 10.
3. Turn over to the **right** side and repeat raising your **left** leg.



Pelvic Rock

1. On a hard surface such as the floor, get down on your hands and knees with your palms down and your fingertips facing away from your body. Your arms and knees should be shoulders width apart.
2. Drop your head and press your palms into the floor causing your back to stretch up like an angry cat. Hold this for 10 seconds and then relax.
3. Tilting your pelvis forward in a rocking motion raise your head and extend your neck so that your back arches and your belly sags towards the floor. Hold this for 10 seconds and then relax.
4. Continue this rocking back and forth motion for 10 rocks.



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Side stretch

1. Sit cross legged on the floor, keeping your buttocks flat on the floor.
2. Extend RIGHT/LEFT arm behind palm down on the floor for stability.
3. Raise the opposite arm up and extend gently over the head pointing towards the floor until you feel the stretch along the side of your abdomen.
4. Hold for 10 - 20 seconds and then switch sides.



Hamstring Stretch

1. Sit on the floor with your buttocks flat against the floor with both legs extended in front of you.
2. Using a towel or yoga strap, hook the strap behind the LEFT/RIGHT foot as shown.
3. Slowly lift the leg until the stretch is felt in the back of the thigh holding for a count of 10.
4. Switch sides and repeat the stretch



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Mid Back Stretch

1. Kneel down on the floor and gently lower your chest forward towards the floor
2. Extending your arms, reach forward as far as possible holding for at least the count of 10



Mid Back Rotation Stretch

1. Sitting on the floor on your buttocks, spread your legs wide apart.
2. Reach alternatively to each side while leaning forward keep your chest pointed towards the floor as far as possible.



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Lower Trunk Rotation Stretch

1. Lie on the floor keeping your back flat and your feet together and your arms spread.
2. Rotate your knees to the right side while looking to the left and hold for a count of 10.
3. Alternate sides rotating your knees to the left side while looking to the right and hold for a count of 10.



Back Press

1. Stand with your back against a wall with your feet 10-12 inches away from it.
2. Press the lower part of your back against the wall.
3. Hold for 10 seconds, then release.



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Lower Leg Stretches for Leg Cramps:

1. Stand with RIGHT/LEFT foot back with the forward leg bent. Keeping heel on the floor, turned slightly out. Lean into the wall until the stretch is felt in the calf.



1. Stand with RIGHT/LEFT foot back, leg straight with the foot flat on the floor about 1 foot from the wall. Extend the opposite leg forward tilting the foot up until the toes touch the wall as shown. Lean into the wall until the stretch is felt in the calf, foot, and back of ankle.



Additional Help:

Report all new back pain or cramping to your physician.

DO NOT do any exercise without consulting with your physician if you have had any of the following:

- Bleeding or spotting
- Low placenta
- Threatened or recurrent miscarriage
- A history of pre-term labor or premature birth
- Weak cervix

After the first trimester (12 weeks) avoid any exercises that involves lying flat on your back for more than a few minutes.

To sleep more comfortably, take the pressure off your lower back by lying on your side with your knees bent and a soft pillow or cushion placed between the knees. You may put an additional pillow or cushion underneath the abdomen for added support.

For comfort, you may apply heat to the lower back but **never on the abdomen**. You may heat up a “body buddy” in the microwave for 45 seconds to 1 minute and place on the base of the spine. If you use a heating pad, use the lowest setting and place it behind your back for 15-20 minutes maximum. Do NOT fall asleep on it or lie flat on your back for longer than 20 minutes.

For additional physical therapy you may self-refer to Des Moines University Physical Therapy: **(515) 271-1717**
Most insurances are accepted including Medicaid.

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