

Congratulations on your Pregnancy!



Important information about exercising while pregnant:

What an exciting time ahead! Before commencing/continuing your practice, we first require that you have had the all clear from your GP and can continue exercise. Prior to each class it is important that you let your instructor know that you are pregnant and how far along you are. This will ensure that you are provided with suitable modifications during your class.

Is Pilates Mat, Reformer and Yoga safe for pregnancy?

Pilates is a low-impact and a very safe exercise that you can practice for your entire pregnancy. Yoga can be too much 'up and down' movement, bringing on nausea or heartburn. If this is the case for you, it is best to find a pregnancy yoga class or check out yin yoga on our schedule. If you are comfortable to continue just be sure that you let your instructor know that you are pregnant and how far along you are each class, as there are certain postures to avoid in varying stages of your pregnancy.

Reformer when pregnant:

Pilates on a Reformer is the ideal way to exercise. This is because Reformers properly and safely support the body whilst the exercises strengthen the core muscles and improve flexibility and mobility. All of this not only helps during pregnancy and childbirth but can also support a faster recovery after the birth.

Can I exercise in my first trimester?

Exercising in the first trimester is safe and recommended if you have had a healthy pregnancy and/or past pregnancies. You may have already heard of the first trimester being the 'riskiest' stage of pregnancy, for this reason we require that you seek doctor's approval prior to coming in for your first class. In the first trimester your body changes drastically, your blood volume triples and your heart rate sits approximately fifteen percent higher than normal. You may notice you become out of breath easily (which is to be expected), it is important that you honour these changes and take the lower options provided in your class.

I have never done Pilates reformer, mat, barre or Yoga before, can I start now?

General guidelines suggest a pregnant woman should not start a new exercise if they have not been doing that exercise six months prior to becoming pregnant. Many doctors and gyms have varying opinions. At Ritual Yoga & Pilates we will let you practice Pilates mat, reformer and yin yoga. Unfortunately, we cannot allow you to attend Pilates Barre if you have not had a solid practice (2-3 classes p/w) for the six months prior to becoming pregnant, as it is simply not safe for you or your growing baby. There are also certain yoga classes that we do not recommend please get in contact with us so we can best support you with your class choices.

What are the benefits of Pilates, Reformer or Yoga for Pregnancy?

The benefits of maintaining a regular practice during your pregnancy are endless! These include;

- a) decreased risk of developing complications such as preeclampsia or gestational diabetes
- b) minimises the physical effects of pregnancy
- c) builds strength and fitness in a safe environment, preparing you for childbirth
- d) helps to reduce the postural changes of pregnancy
- e) limits chances of new injuries
- f) faster and stronger recovery postpartum

1. Strengthen your abdominal muscles - Later into pregnancy your body releases hormones, one of which, relaxing, can cause the ligaments connecting your bones to become more flexible. Whilst flexibility sounds attractive, flexibility of ligaments can make you more prone to lower back and pelvic pain. So, to combat this you need to strengthen your abdominal muscles. Reformer Pilates enables you to effectively focus on this whilst continuing to feel confident that your body is being well supported.

2. Reduce strain when getting in and out of bed - We take something as simple as getting in and out of bed for granted but for a pregnant woman this can become one of the hardest movements to make. The weaker the muscles and the less focus there is on good posture and movement, the greater the risk of strains and pains. With our range of Reformer Pilates exercises we make sure that we focus on getting the right muscles strengthened and help to build an understanding of how to move as your body grows. This includes how to properly and safely get on and off the Reformer which are techniques you can also use at home.

3. Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles (PFM) - When doing Pilates (Reformer, mat) exercises we focus a lot on the importance of strengthening our Pelvic Floor muscles. But, what is the Pelvic Floor? The floor of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle and other tissues. These layers stretch like a hammock from the tailbone at the back, to the pubic bone in front. A woman's pelvic floor muscles support her bladder, womb (uterus) and bowel and the urine tube, the vagina and the back passage all pass through the pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor really is the core of our body and during pregnancy it's vital to keep the muscles strong. This is because the increased weight from your baby, combined with your hormonal changes, can weaken your pelvic floor muscles. Pilates movements and exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles which mean that during pregnancy or after the birth the risk of incontinence is lessened.

4. Controlled Breathing - Breathing correctly and in a controlled manner is a key principle of Pilates. You will always be encouraged to breathe deeply into your ribcage to feel it expand sideways. This is known as lateral breathing, a technique specifically developed to engage your pelvic floor and deep abdominal muscles. As pregnancy progresses, women can find themselves short of breath as the pressure on the diaphragm increases. By focussing on directing the intake of breath into the sides of the ribs you are supporting the diaphragm as it, in turn, supports the intestines.



5. Reducing back pain - Many of the muscle pains and posture strains during pregnancy develop in the back. This isn't altogether surprising when we consider that the same back muscles used to support your normal frame and weight are suddenly put under increased pressure. This is because during pregnancy we get hormonal changes, changes in weight and weight distribution and posture changes. If your body isn't prepared for that your back muscles can go into spasm and cause ongoing pain. Strengthening the gluteal muscles in conjunction with the pelvic floor will help to reduce the chance of developing back pain and prepare you for the daily changes in your body. Your posture and body alignment both play a key role in managing your weight distribution and Reformer Pilates gives you better Requirements
Seek doctors O.K. first.

General Exercise Guidelines

Maintain a moderate intensity

Keep cool

Stay hydrated

Warm up and cool down well

Avoid prone (lying flat), unilateral exercises, wide lunge/stance positions

Activate pelvic floor muscles during all exercises to keep it as strong as possible

Stop immediately if feeling unwell



First Trimester

Congratulations! You have just found out you are pregnant! You have probably heard of the endless benefits of yoga and pilates during pregnancy. Firstly, make a trip to your doctor and get the O.K. to commence exercise. The first trimester can be tough! it is quite common that you may not feel well enough to exercise during this time, it is important to tune in and listen to your body, take peace in trusting that these symptoms will often subside as you enter your second trimester. Many mothers-to-be experience nausea, vomiting, fatigue, headaches, constipation, bloating, mood swings, breast tenderness and a general feeling of malaise, this can often take away the excitement of pregnancy. However, fear not! Pilates is a safe, low intensity exercise to perform and helps to sooth many of the aches and annoyances of the first trimester. As you may be aware, the first trimester has the highest risk of miscarriage, so it is important that the intensity of your exercise (whether you are walking, running, cleaning etc) needs to be a lot lighter than normal and you avoid raising your body temperature and heart rate too high (basically do not push yourself so far that you are out of breath). In saying this exercising in your first trimester is completely safe and has also shown that it may reduce the risk of miscarriage, when done safely.

During the first few months of growing your baby, your cardiac output (blood volume) increases by 30-50% and your heart rate by upto 15%, you may find that you are easily out of breath and may experience dizziness when getting up too quickly from lying down. It is important that you honour these changes within your body and take lighter options, which will be provided by your instructor. When coming to class, you may follow the class along as per normal; performing light abdominal exercises and light weight resistance exercises are encouraged.

Second Trimester

As your baby continues to grow, you may start to show around this time. Throughout your second and third trimester there are certain exercises that should be avoided.

Avoid all abdominal exercises ie. crunches (except leg lifts/toe taps).

During the second and third trimester, avoid strengthening the rectus abdominis (six pack muscles). As the stomach grows, the six pack muscles naturally begin to separate, Diastasis Recti is a common condition in pregnant mothers by which too much pressure is put on the abdominal wall and over-stretching may occur - this may result in the tearing of the abdominal cavity.

Avoid prone positions (lying on the stomach)

If not already obvious, this is not only uncomfortable for the mother but also for the baby.

Avoid prolonged supine positions (lying on the back)

Lying on the back should be avoided during the second-to-third trimester, however, some ladies report feeling comfortable to continue this position throughout the entire pregnancy. You as a mother will know when you should no longer continue this position, it will often feel uncomfortable as the weight of the baby may put pressure on your lower lumbar. If you spend too much time in this position (esp. In the third trimester), it may also occlude the main blood vessels supplying the mother, causing nausea or dizziness. It is best to take side-lying exercises, which will be provided by your instructor.

Third Trimester

Yay! You are almost there! During this time, you may notice that your posture has changed dramatically. This is due to many hormones but mostly the increased weight of your baby. Because of this extra weight intensity should be greatly reduced. During this time, focus on pelvic floor activation, gluteal strengthening and arm strengthening - all of these exercises can be performed in a seated, side-lying or a standing position.

Avoid all exercises listed in the second trimester, plus; Avoid inner thigh work. The adductor muscles in the thigh have a common attachment to the pubic symphysis (pubic bone), in the advanced stages of pregnancy ligaments and joints in this area become more lax and separate- preparing you for childbirth. This can cause instability of the pelvis, so working inner thighs on an unstable pelvis may cause further separation.

All of our instructors are trained in pregnancy Yoga & Pilates, please listen to our instructors and take the modifications provided for you. If you ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe please stop what you are doing immediately. If you have any health conditions that arise during your pregnancy, the instructor needs to be aware of this prior to class and you must re-seek your doctor's approval to continue exercise.

If you ever have any questions, concerns or feedback please feel free to email hello@ritualpalmbeach.com.

Thank you & congratulations,
Love the Ritual Team xx

See our timetable for classes at www.ritualyogaandpilates.com.au/pages/timetable
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