

#	Age & Stage	Theme	Title
5	Pregnancy	Managing stress during pregnancy	Did you know that positive feelings during pregnancy can help your unborn baby's brain?

**Positive feelings during pregnancy can help your unborn baby's brain. As future parents, work together to reduce stress in your lives. Here are some suggestions:**

- ◆ Take time to be active every day. This will help you relax and will provide many health benefits. Improving muscle tone, strength and endurance are important for labour, delivery and recovery.
  - If you have been active regularly before pregnancy, you can safely continue physical activity during pregnancy. Inform your doctor or midwife of your physical activity program.
  - If you have not been active before pregnancy, you can safely start by walking daily. Consult with your doctor or midwife before beginning your physical activity program.
  - Drink water before, during, and after your activity to replace body fluids lost through sweating.
  - Avoid activities requiring sudden starts or stops, jumping, or rapid changes in direction.
  - Avoid being active in hot, humid weather, especially during the first trimester, or when you are ill.
  - Check the temperature of a heated pool before swimming. Avoid hot tubs or whirlpools.
  - Avoid exercises requiring you to lie on your back after four months (16 weeks) of pregnancy. Instead, perform the exercises while lying on your side, sitting or standing.
- ◆ See if you can reduce your stress. Your reaction to a situation will affect your level of stress. Here are some suggestions:
  - Identify what is causing your stress. Is it something you have control over or not? Is it a problem you need to deal with or should you let someone else deal with it? Will this problem get bigger with time or will it seem trivial later?
  - Manage your workload and let go of certain things. Pregnancy is a time to look at the priorities for you and your baby.
  - Practice meditation, breathing exercises or calming strategies to help relieve stress.
  - Try to do something pleasant for yourself a few times a week (a bath, pleasant thoughts, a nice meal, etc.).
  - Share your thoughts with your partner, family or a good friend to help you keep things in perspective. Healthy communication between parents reduces stress in families.
  - Practice managing your anger and other emotions. Later, it will teach your child to do the same.
  - Try to build a good support network during your pregnancy. You will appreciate it after the birth of your baby.
  - Some situations may be beyond your control and you may need to live with them. Acknowledging this may be helpful.
- ◆ While stronger emotions are normal in pregnancy, symptoms of depression or anxiety should be identified. For example, poor sleep, excessive sleep, loss or increase of appetite, feeling sad and difficulty concentrating may be signs of prenatal anxiety and depression. Prenatal depression or anxiety that is not dealt with can continue on into the postpartum period. If you think you are suffering from depression or anxiety for more than two weeks, talk to your health care provider.
- ◆ Domestic violence is very stressful. If you are in a difficult relationship, talk to your healthcare provider about it.

Find ways to relax. Set a peaceful tone for your future family life. Give your baby the best possible start.

## Links

- ◆ *Active Pregnancy*. Physical Activity Resource Centre. [parc.ophea.net/sites/parc.ophea.net/files/PARC\\_ActivePregnancyResourceFinal\\_14SE09.pdf](http://parc.ophea.net/sites/parc.ophea.net/files/PARC_ActivePregnancyResourceFinal_14SE09.pdf)
- ◆ *Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief*. HelpGuide.org. [www.helpguide.org/mental/stress\\_relief\\_meditation\\_yoga\\_relaxation.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm)
- ◆ *Assaulted Women's Helpline*. 416-863-0511. 1-866-863-0511.