



## Pregnant Women and Swim Exercises in Osteopathic Medicine

Pregnant swim exercises can be one of the most relaxing exercises for pregnant women. Many women ask whether swimming while pregnant is safe and the answer is yes, it is. Your risk of injury is very low because you are in a non-gravitational state where no pressure is on your back and joints plus swimming takes pressure off your joints through swim exercises thus liberating muscles tension, adjusting vertebrae and liberating root nerves. This is why you enjoy that wonderful weightless feeling of being in the pool...which is especially good in the later stages, after you've been carrying around all that extra weight and bulk.

However, all pregnant women should avoid hot tubs, Jacuzzis and saunas, as there is now substantial evidence that overheating can harm the baby. This goes for hot baths at home too, and for the same reason, don't add Epsom salts or other bath salts to your bath.

You get a good cardio workout from a pregnant swim because it uses all your major muscle groups, so it's a great way to stay fit and toned as you carry your baby inside you. If you've been used to plenty of swimming before becoming pregnant, then it's usually safe to carry on.

Consult with your Osteopathic Physician monthly during your pregnancy to check on your back for any blockages in order to liberate them by O.M.Ts (Osteopathic Manipulative Techniques), keep the spine and joints free of tension so that swimming will keep and maintain a steady state of wellbeing in your musculo-skeletal system.

Once in the water and ready to start your pregnant swim exercise, it's a good idea to do some gentle stretching before you actually set off for your swim. Then start slowly and gently in order to warm your muscles up and get your heart rate up steadily. If at any time you feel dizzy or you get cramp, stop and rest.



If the dizziness persists or the cramping should keep happening, then it would be a good idea to get checked out by your Physician.

Can pool chemicals or bacteria harm your unborn baby? There's no evidence that this can happen. The only exception might be if your waters have broken, as this is a time when you need to avoid the risk of infection. Otherwise, provided you don't overdo it, swimming in clean, warm water should do no harm.

### Conditions that might make swimming in pregnancy inadvisable

**Placenta praevia:** If you've been diagnosed with placenta praevia, where the placenta is lying low in the womb, you will have been advised to take life very gently. This applies to swimming too: floating gently around in a warm (but not too hot) pool is fine but you should avoid strenuous or lap-on-lap endurance type swimming.

**If your Waters Break:** Towards the end of the 3rd trimester, as your body prepares for delivery, your waters may break. You will certainly know about it if this happens and it is advisable to avoid any possibility of infection reaching the baby at this time, so swimming would not be a good idea.

**If you have a heart condition or high blood pressure:** In such a situation you should already be getting advice from your Physician about what you can and can't do. To be safe, stick to the old mantra: if in doubt, check it out.

There's only a very tiny chance of injury if you want to swim while pregnant, especially if you are sensible and pace yourself. Still, be extra careful when walking around the pool to avoid slipping and, needless to say, diving and jumping off the side are not advised. Some things you can do to burn calories safely while in the water are water aerobics, deep-water running and swimming. You can join a water aerobics class or simply swim twenty minutes a day for 3 to 6 days a week. Don't forget to avoid hot tubs and saunas since they can raise your body temperature to high levels that may injure your baby.

### Pregnant Swim Exercises

Low impact water aerobics. It's fine to keep doing these while pregnant, though you do not want to do jumps or high kicks. Alter the exercises if you feel you need to, by reducing the range of movement and/or going at half speed. Joining a low impact water aerobics class at your local pool can be fun, and your instructor will be able to advise you.

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