

## Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



Congratulations on your pregnancy! As your baby grows, your body will be constantly changing - don't be afraid of exercise during this time. It is actually very important to *keep* exercising to support your changing body. It can have a positive effect on your labour and birth experience, as well as post-partum recovery. Think about preparing your body for the strenuous physical activity of giving birth; keeping your body supported as you grow; as well as preparing for the strain of constantly lifting and carrying your little one.

It is important to listen to your body and slow down if something doesn't feel right. A consistent, light to moderate effort is enough. If you feel short of breath or just uncomfortable, stop and rest. Sometimes you just need to change the positioning of your body during an exercise, other times it is just not the right exercise for you. There are always options to modify stretching and strengthening exercises to target the same area of your body in a comfortable and safe way.

These are the most important areas to focus on during pregnancy:

- Flexibility of the hips
- Pelvis mobility and symmetry
- Strengthening the glutes and hips
- Stable core + pelvic floor

Remember: being focused about using your core and pelvic floor appropriately throughout EVERY exercise is key.





This video is great tutorial to remember how to correctly align the body, and then relax and contract the pelvic floor and core with breath. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP3Rio-jh9Q>

Note: We highly recommend an assessment by a Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist to help you connect with your pelvic floor and prepare for a confident birth experience.

# Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



Start gently and ease your way deeper as you take controlled breaths in and out. Find the lines of tension in your muscles and take your time. Spend at least 5 slow, deep breaths in each position. If you are not comfortable lying flat on your back, place a ball or cushion behind your upper back to create an inclined position. \* = Priority Stretches

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                      |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Ball Rocking</b><br/>                 Rest your chest on a ball or chair with your knees apart. Gently rock back and forth, side to side.<br/>                 (Low Back, Hips)</p>                                                                                                                           |     |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Child's Pose *</b><br/>                 Knees wide apart, toes together. Reach forward and plant hands on mat. Sit hips back to heels, forehead to mat. Ease chest towards mat as you breathe. Repeat with a reach to each side.<br/>                 (Side body, low back, hips)</p>                         |    |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Cat-Cow</b><br/>                 Knees under hips, hands under shoulders. Find a neutral spine. Tuck tail and head, arching back towards ceiling. Reverse, allowing belly to gently rest towards floor. Can complete seated if more comfortable.<br/>                 (Spine)</p>                             |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Adductors</b><br/>                 Sit tall with weight on SIT bones and ribs over hips. Lean forward, leading from the belly as you breathe. Repeat towards each leg. Drop elbow towards ground and sweep arm overhead to stretch side body.<br/>                 (Inner thighs, back of leg, side body)</p> |  |  |  |  |

# Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



## Deep Squat \*

Practice sitting deep into a wide squat position. Start by using a stool or roller to sit on, or holding onto a door frame as you lower into the squat. Use your elbows to press the knees outwards. Sit tall.  
(Inner thighs, hips)



## Merrmaid

Bend knees to same side. Plant palm on mat, reach up to ceiling, then gently over and across your body.  
(Sides of low back)



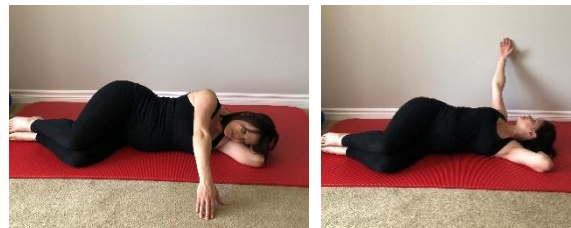
## Hip Flexor \*

Kneel with knee and front foot 'hip distance' apart. Square hips to front, set ribs over hips. Place most of weight on kneeling leg. Hinge forward from the hip (not the chest), maintaining ribs over hips. Reach overhead with arm on kneeling side.  
(Front of hip, thigh, lower abdomen)



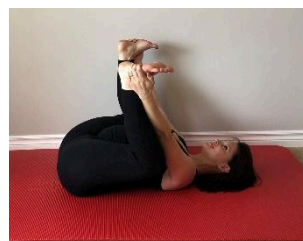
## Spine Twist

Lie on side with hips stacked. Gently open arms and reach back, opening chest and keeping knees together. Be gentle and work with breathing.  
(Spine)



## Happy Baby

Bring knees to either side of belly, reach for outside of feet. Gently pull knees towards floor.  
(Hips, inner thighs, low back)



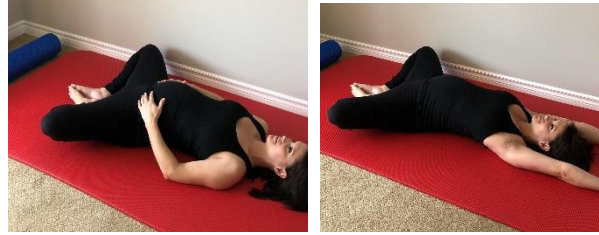
## Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



### **Reclined Cobblers \***

Rest on your back, bring your feet together, allow knees to drop to floor. If comfortable, reach up overhead, dropping the lower ribs as you breath out to lengthen the armpit region.

(Pelvis symmetry, inner thigh, shoulders, sides)



### **Hamstring \***

Bend one knee, foot on the floor. Wrap a band around bottom of foot, press heel towards ceiling, using arms to help deepen stretch.

(Back of leg)



### **Figure 4 \***

Bend knee, foot on floor, cross opposite ankle over knee. If able, reach through to grab thigh and pull towards shoulder. Open crossed knee, using elbow to deepen tension.

(Hip muscles, piriformis – can easily perform seated)



# Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



## PRE-NATAL STRENGTHENING

Aim for 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Remember, excellent form is key! Take your time and be purposeful with each position. Move on to the advanced (#) options only when you feel confident that you can complete a full set of the beginner exercise with excellent alignment and core and pelvic floor control. Make sure you NEVER have any doming or bulging of the abdomen. This means you are not engaging the deeper core musculature effectively and may need to simplify the exercise. \* = Priority Exercises

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>Bridge *</b><br/>Lie on back, flat on the floor or resting on a ball, knees bent to 90. Knees open and hips, knees, ankles in a line. Exhale as you squeeze the glutes to lift the hips. Keep a neutral spine, not tucking the bum to lift. Inhale to lower.<br/># - Wrap a band just above the knee and maintain knee distance apart throughout mvmt<br/>(Glutes)</p>                                                                                                                         |  |
| <p><b>Deadbug *</b><br/>Engage the deep core by tensioning the abs below the belly button. Maintain ribs over hips alignment. Don't let the lower ribs stick out.<br/>Heel slide – inhale, gently extend 1 leg out; exhale, bring back to start (Add arms reaching to ceiling)<br/># Knee lift – inhale, lift 1 knee over hip, keeping 90, exhale return to start (Add – start with both knees elevated)<br/>## Extend – inhale, extend opposite leg and arm, exhale, return to start<br/>(Core)</p> |  |
| <p><b>Clamshells *</b><br/>Lie on side, knees bent to 90, hips stacked. Inhale, squeeze glutes, open knees 8 inches, exhale, return. No hip rocking.<br/># - add resistance band<br/>(Glutes (gmed))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |

# Pre-natal Stretching and Strengthening



## Side Plank

Lie on side, hips stacked, knees at 90, elbow under shoulder. Press up in plank and hold for 10s, repeat. (Glutes, Obliques)



## Birdog

Start on all fours, neutral spine, knees under hips, hands under shoulders. Beginner - exhale, tension lower abs, maintain alignment, slowly extend leg behind, foot touching floor, return. Alternate by extending arm forward to shoulder height. # - Extend leg out inline with hip, maintain hip alignment. ## - Extend opposite arm and leg (Core, shoulders, hips)



## Squat \*

Set feet slightly wider than hips. Ensure arches lifted, check ribs over hips alignment. Inhale to lower down, knees follow baby toes; exhale, lift floor, tension lower abs, stand tall. (use stool if need support) # - Add weight. (Glutes, quads, core)



## Split Squat/Lunge \*

Split legs evenly front and back. Align each foot to each hip. Square hips, set ribs over hips. Inhale, bring knee to floor, lean slightly fwd to maintain ribs over hips. Exhale, squeeze glutes and thigh, rise to standing. (Glutes, quads, core)



## Step Ups

Front: Start as lunge with front foot on step. Exhale, press into stool, come to standing tall, knee up to hip height. Tension abs and square hips to



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balance, hold 2 s, return to start.  
 Side: Start in squat position with one foot on stool. Maintain ribs over hips. Step up as above.  
 (Glutes, quads, core)

**Hip Flexion**  
 Stand feet under hips, lift arches, ribs over hips. Slowly raise knee to hip height, 90 degrees at knee, maintain level pelvis.  
 (Core, hip flexors, balance)



**Deadlift \***  
 Place band under feet, hold w long arms, hands in line w feet. Feet hip distance apart, ribs over hips. Inhale, hinge hips behind feet to bend forward, neutral spine, long arms; exhale, tension abs, lift floor, stand tall, shift hips under ribs again.  
 (Glutes, core)



**Kickbacks**  
 Place band under 1 foot and hold ends against the wall. Find ribs over hips, slight bend in standing leg, bring band knee to 90. Exhale, press heel back and to the floor, in line with your spine. Inhale, slowly return.  
 (Glutes)



**“Monster walks”/Side Steps**  
 Wrap band just above knees, bend knees half way, ribs over hips with a slight forward lean. Step one leg out to the side, then bring other leg to meet it. Complete 5 steps in one direction, then 5 steps in the other direction. Keep the bend in the knees and alignment throughout the exercise.



(Glutes, quads)

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## **Pull Aparts \***

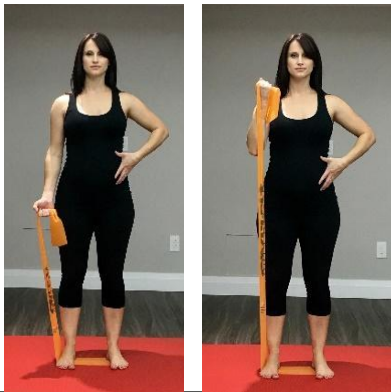
Exhale, open arms to the side til band just touches the chest. Squeeze through the back muscles between the shoulder blades, keep shoulders low, keep arms straight. Inhale to return.

(Back, posture muscles)



## **Bicep Curls**

Stand on band, arm slightly bent at side. Exhale, bend elbow to shoulder. Inhale to extend. Keep ribs over hips (Upper arm)



## **Shoulder Press**

Bend elbow to 90, elbow at shoulder height, band under foot. Exhale, press up over head to straight arm, bringing arm beside ear (Don't press forward, press to the sky). Inhale to return. Keep ribs over hips, don't arch back as you press up.

(Shoulder)



## **Side Raise**

Band under foot, arm slightly in front of body in line with front of chest. Exhale, lift arm to side, keeping straight, just to shoulder height. Keep hand in line with front of chest. Inhale to return.

(Shoulder)



## **Chest Press**

Kneel with knee under hip and foot in line with opp hip. Align ribs over hips. Bring hand to shoulder height, bend elbow and keep under shoulder height. Exhale, press arm forward, inhale, return to start.

(Chest, shoulder)



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### **Tricep Extension**

Kneel with knee under hip and foot in line with opp hip. Align ribs over hips. Press arm straight in line with shoulder. Inhale, bend elbow to 90, exhale, press arm straight. (Triceps, shoulder)



### **Seated Row**

Sit tall with legs extended, keep bent as much as needed to keep ribs over hips. Wrap band around feet, hold ends with long arms. Exhale, pull elbows back and squeeze shoulder blades together. Keep shoulder and chest open. Inhale, return.

**Low Row:** Exhale, pull straight arm down to beside hips in low "V". Inhale, return. (Back, postural muscles)

