

prenatal workout (part 1)

Tone your upper body with five Pilates mat exercises. Demonstrated by Audrey D'Cotta of The Moving Body

Photos by Gabriel Pang

When you are pregnant, it's easy to stop working out and spend most of your time resting but for a healthy body and smooth delivery, it's important to keep moving. Exercise eases stiff joints and revs up your energy. Start with some simple stretches you can do at home and walks around the neighbourhood.

1. Chest Shrugs

BENEFITS: Mobilises the shoulders and strengthens the upper back muscles to support carrying the baby. Improves upper back posture. Takes the weight of the baby off the spine while doing the exercise.

START POSITION:

- On hands and knees in an all fours position with arms and thighs vertical to the mat.

- Spine in a neutral position: Head, shoulder blades and back of pelvis in a horizontal line with a slight arch at the back of the belly button.

MOVEMENT:

8 repetitions

- Inhale to allow the chest to move downwards towards the floor allowing a depression between the back of the shoulder blades to form.
- Exhale to push the floor away from you with your arms without losing the neutral alignment of your spine. Think of widening between the shoulder blades and allowing the chest to come up again between the back of the shoulder blades.



2. Thread a Needle

BENEFITS: Strengthens the upper body. Stretches the shoulders and spine. The weight of the baby is taken off the spine while doing the exercise.

START POSITION:

- On hands and knees in an all fours position with arms and thighs vertical to the mat.
- Spine in a neutral position: Head, shoulder blades and back of pelvis in a horizontal line with a slight arch at the back of the belly button.



MOVEMENT:

8 repetitions

- Inhale to reach the left arm along the mat underneath your chest and reach towards the right side of your mat.
- Exhale to rotate your lower ribs, chest, shoulders and head in sequence to the right side of the room as you bend your right elbow, bringing your chest towards the mat.
- Inhale to return to the start and repeat the exercise on the other side.



3. Leg Pull front

BENEFITS: Strengthens the upper body, stretches the chest and front of the shoulders. Strengthens the back of the legs and buttocks, stretches the front of the hips. Improves upper back posture especially if you are bending over to carry the baby and breastfeed.



START POSITION:

- Seated on the mat with knees bent and arms behind you, finger tips are positioned pointing away from you.
- Spine in a neutral position: Head, shoulder blades and back of pelvis in a vertical line with a slight arch at the back of the belly button.

MOVEMENT:

8 repetitions each side if doing 1 variation only, 4 repetitions each side if doing both variations

BEGINNER

- Inhale to push into the mat with your hands and feet and lift your hips up towards the ceiling. Aim to get the chest, torso and knees in a horizontal line.
- Exhale to lower hips back down to the mat.



ADVANCED

- Inhale to push into the mat with your hands and feet and lift your hips up towards the ceiling. Aim to get the chest, torso and knees in a horizontal line.
- Exhale to lift the right leg off the ground maintaining the angle of the knee bent at 90 degrees.
- Inhale to lower the leg down. Exhale to repeat on the other side.



4. Twist

BENEFITS: Strengthens the upper body and side muscles of the torso, the buttocks and outer thighs while stretching the spine.

START POSITION:

- Seated on the mat in a sideways orientation with knees bent and one arm on the mat in a diagonal alignment. Other hand is resting on the hips.



MOVEMENT:

8 repetitions each side if doing 1 variation only, 4 repetitions each side if doing both variations

BEGINNER

- Inhale as you lift your pelvis off the mat and shift weight onto the hand on the mat to support you. The hand on the hip rises up and reaches across the room leading the whole body to move in the shape of an arc.
- Exhale to return your pelvis to the mat.



ADVANCED

- Inhale as you lift your pelvis off the mat and shift weight onto the hand on the mat to support you. The hand on the hip rises up and reaches across the room leading the whole body to move in the shape of an arc.
- Exhale as the top arm reaches vertical to the ceiling, inhale to reach the arm even more and lengthen the entire body from head to toe.
- Exhale to reach the arm under your torso and rotate the ribs, chest and shoulders without moving the hips as much as possible.
- Inhale to reach the arm back up to the ceiling.
- Exhale to return your pelvis to the mat.



5. Pinwheel

BENEFITS: To mobilise the shoulder and stretch the upper and middle back. Improve rotation in the spine for everyday activities and even sports. Great complementary exercise for swimming.

START POSITION:

Sidelying on the mat with knees bent and pillows under the head to keep the head level with the spine. Head, shoulder blades and back of pelvis in a straight line with a slight arch at the back of the belly button, both arms straight in front of you.

MOVEMENT:

4 repetitions in each direction

- Inhale to reach the top arm along the mat drawing a quarter circle along the mat towards the head and start to rotate the torso as the eyes follow the movement of the arms and start using the arm to draw a circle around the body.
- Exhale when the arm reaches the halfway mark and begins to return to the start position. Ensure that the movement is done with emphasis on the rotation of the body and not just the arm drawing a circle.
- Repeat 4 times lying on the other side.



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