



HOW TO ADJUST EXERCISE DURING *Pregnancy*

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Welcome to your Guide on Adjusting Exercise in Pregnancy!

We are Heather and Bri and we have been coaching pregnant athletes like you for the last 6 years. From collegiate and professional athletes (Bri) to athletic moms who love fitness (Heather) we have years of experience helping women adapt the exercise they love for the pregnant and postpartum chapters of mom life.

We know it can be scary, the idea of “losing your gains” or not being able to maintain the level of fitness you once had. We are here to help you adjust both the physical changes you are facing in pregnancy and the mental struggles so many women face as they adjust their workouts to meet the demands of their pregnant body.

Physical Adjustments

In the coming pages we will detail many of the changes we recommend and encourage you to consider as your pregnancy progresses. You'll find notes for each trimester and we suggest you reference this often.

Your goal in pregnancy is protect and preserve your core and pelvic floor health in the ways you have control of. You can't control everything about your pregnancy, but you can control 2 things.

1. Your exercise selection
2. Your intention around exercise

Small adjustments that you can make for pregnancy can make a big difference for common pre and postnatal symptoms like diastasis recti, incontinence, orthopedic discomfort, pelvic pain, and pelvic organ prolapse.

Making these adjustments now, in pregnancy, helps set you up for a strong return to exercise postpartum.

Instead of thinking about exercise in pregnancy as something that needs to be modified to be “pregnancy safe” we encourage you think about adjusting your entire approach to exercise. It's so much more than modifying one unsafe exercise for another safe exercise.



Mental Adjustments

We use the term **athlete brain** a lot and this is an important concept to understand both what it is and how it shows up in pregnancy.

Athlete brain is the intrinsic motivation to challenge, pursue and perform. It can be on the spectrum of "type A" personality, characteristics of how one identifies, and is often driven by competitiveness, fear, ego, anxiety, success, energy, routine and capability.

This is a motivated mindset and if leveraged well, can assist in many aspects of a person's success. At its worst, it can sabotage efforts, health and feelings of worth.

It's easy to believe, as a strong, fit woman, that you are exempt from needing to adapt your approach. As an athletic woman you are probably an EXPERT at pushing through, not always from a place of ego, but because you have been trained to ignore subtle signs to ease up or stop, or feel seen/perceived as "weak."

It's easy to see how this can become problematic in pregnancy.

You can also recognize it's a problem and not know how to fix it because your identity is so engrained in this belief system.

We wish we could give you a 3 step plan on how to master this mindset, but it doesn't work like that. Instead, awareness is great first step to keeping your athlete brain in check. When you're feeling the sense to push harder or that these rules and adjustments don't apply to you because (insert literally any reason, we've heard them all) you can hopefully bring a voice a reason to the conversation in your head.

All the physical adaptations we are giving you on the following pages will not matter if you cannot address the mental adaptations you need to make.

We know this can be a frustrating and humbling process, we've both been there. Have patience with yourself and do not expect perfection.



In closing

In pregnancy, a mindset of surrender is key.

Control what you can, adjust based on our recommendations, and surrender to the rest. There are certain things we are never going to be able to control. Genetics and delivery are two big ones, but exercise and approach is within our control.

We applaud you for being intentional about your fitness during this chapter of your life. If you need more specific guidance and workouts please visit the last page of this guide for more information on the pregnancy workout programs we offer.

We are with you,
Bri and Heather



RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE PREGNANT ATHLETE

1st Trimester

The 1st Trimester can be very challenging for many women. Nausea and exhaustion often show up out of nowhere and make training difficult, if not impossible for some.

In this trimester you don't have to be overly concerned about modifying to protect your core and pelvic floor. Instead we encourage you to give yourself permission to build in more rest to your workouts and modify to honor your changing energy levels.

MINDSET

- Adjust your mental approach to exercise and what your typical routine looks like.
- Become aware of your core + pelvic health and how you can make adjustments in pregnancy to manage and prevent symptoms.
- Extend yourself grace and patience if you are struggling with nausea and fatigue. A sense of normalcy will resume eventually.

MODIFICATIONS

- Limit efforts max lifts/efforts, competitions or high risk of falling activities.
- Discontinue use of a weight belt
- Reduce reps, rounds, workout time, or build in additional rest as needed to accommodate any nausea or exhaustion.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Do you have a history of any symptoms you need to monitor? (IE: incontinence, pressure in your vagina, diastasis recti)
- How does your body currently feel?
- Adopt a mentality of Can I vs Should I?
- Honor your changing energy levels-Honor any mental health changes, don't be afraid to seek help if you feel off.



RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE PREGNANT ATHLETE

2nd Trimester

As nausea and exhaustion (hopefully) decrease this can be a fun chapter of training in pregnancy.

As your belly starts to grow many strategy changes will need to be made to protect your core and pelvic floor.

Use these tips to help adapt a mindset of risk vs. reward and "Can I?" vs "Should I?" when adjusting exercise during this trimester.

MINDSET

- Risk vs reward of movement choices.
- This is a temporary chapter.
- Training SHOULD be different.
- No shame in adjusting or modifying

MODIFICATIONS

- Reduce/eliminate/modify high impact (box jumps, running, jump rope, etc.).
- Reduce eliminate/modify dynamic, gymnastic type movements (kipping, toes to bar, muscle ups, etc.).
- Reduce/eliminate Olympic lifts with barbell when belly impedes bar path.
- Modify sit ups & other ab-focused exercises.
- Eliminate inverted movements (handstand push ups, handstand walking, etc.).
- Reduce loads.
- Switch to an inclined position for prone (belly down) movements (push ups, planks)
- Set up stance may need to be adjusted (eg: sumo deadlifts, shoulder width stance for squatting).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- See a PFPT for initial assessment.
- Monitor symptoms and modify exercise as needed.
- Be able to hold a conversation through training and discontinue breath holding on lifts and movements.



RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE PREGNANT ATHLETE

3rd Trimester

Your pelvic floor is an already stressed system at this stage.

Incorporate a strategy for your breath, loading, and intensity level that protects and preserves the integrity of your pelvic floor at this chapter.

These tips will help guide that strategy.

Remember that you have nothing to prove yourself or anyone else.

MINDSET

- Train for enjoyment. What feels good to you today?
- Value rest & recovery as you prepare for labor, delivery, and postpartum.
- Respect your symptoms, energy levels and interests.
- Adaptability and surrender are strengths.

MODIFICATIONS

- Reduce/eliminate overhead movements.
- Shorten range of motion to accommodate changing body (ie squat to a box).
- If you experience pubic symphysis pain in single leg movements, modify body positioning, try breathing through entire range of motion, or replace with movement that does not trigger pain.
- Reduce the intensity of lifts and workouts.
- Reduce volume/loads.
- Reduce frequency of training.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Include more leisure walking into training plan.
- Increase recovery time.
- Exhale through full range of motion.
- Begin to relax the pelvic floor with targeted breathing exercises.
- Schedule a postpartum PFPT appointment.
- Create a plan for returning to exercise in the postpartum period.



EXERCISE SUBSTITUTION IDEAS

PULL-UPS (STRICT & KIPPING)

- ✓ Ring Rows
- ✓ Band Face Pulls or Pull Aparts
- ✓ Straight Arm Band Pull Down

TOES TO BAR

- ✓ Farmer/Suitcase/Front Rack Carry
- ✓ Palloff Press
- ✓ Med ball slams

RUNNING

- 2nd Tri: Eliminate running
- ✓ Rowing
- ✓ Sled Pushes
- ✓ Dumbbell Farmer Carries

HANDSTAND PUSH UPS

- ✓ Incline Push Ups on Box/Wall/Bench
- ✓ Seated Dumbbell Overhead Press
- ✓ Landmine Press

BURPEES

- Adjust when belly begins to show.
- ✓ Seated ground to overhead
- ✓ Row/bike/ski erg for calories
- ✓ Pregnant Burpees

SITUPS

- ✓ Kettlebell Side Bends
- ✓ Glute Bridges
- ✓ Palloff Presses

RING DIPS

- ✓ Box Dips
- ✓ Band/Dumbbell Tricep Extensions

BARBELL CLEANS & SNATCHES

- ✓ Dumbbell Cleans
- ✓ Dumbbell Snatches

PUSH UPS

- ✓ Incline Push Ups
- ✓ Wall Push Ups (eliminate in 3rd tri)

DOUBLE UNDERS

- ✓ 1st tri: Single unders
- ✓ 2nd tri: biking, rowing, step-ups

DEADLIFT

- ✓ 2nd tri: Adjust to sumo stance
- ✓ Reduce load as needed

BOX JUMPS

- ✓ Step Ups

KETTLEBELL SWINGS

- ✓ 2nd tri: Switch to Russian-style

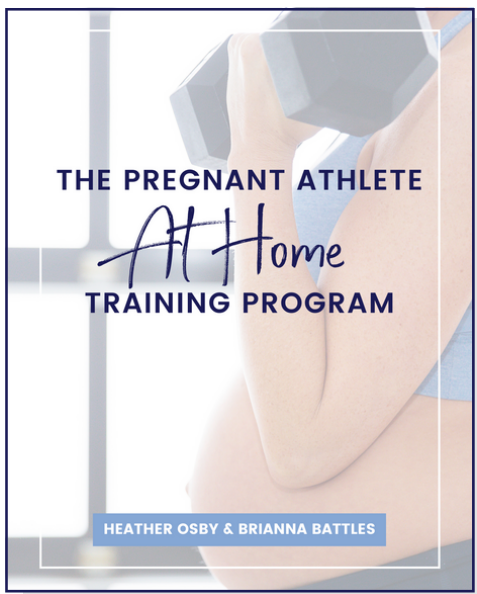


CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading through this guide and expanding your knowledge of how to adjust exercise in your pregnancy. Feel free to print it out and keep a copy of it at your gym as a reference point for you or other pregnant women.

If you find yourself feeling a little overwhelmed with all of these adjustments please know that you don't have to be perfect. Do your best to tune into how you're feeling and adjust as needed with these recommendations.

If you'd like further guidance we have 2 different workout programs available to you.



The Pregnant Athlete At-Home

- At home fitness program
- 3-4 workouts/week
- Minimal equipment
- Easy to follow workouts
- Perfect for beginner and intermediate exercises

[LEARN MORE](#)



The Pregnant Athlete Gym-Based

- Full gym program
- 3-4 workouts/week
- Access to gym equipment needed
- Full strength and conditioning program
- Intermediate to experienced exercisers

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