

# 10 Essential Prenatal Exercises

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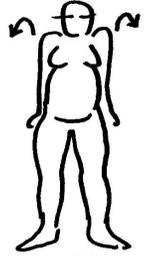
*Try these 10 Everyday Exercises during your pregnancy:*

## 1. Shoulder Rolls Back, standing

**Why:** Helps combat shoulders from slumping forward due to growing breasts & relieves upper back pain due to side-sleeping

**How:** Standing comfortably with feet hip-width apart and arms to your sides, gently lift and roll the shoulders back. Repeat 10 times, multiple times throughout the day

**Note:** You can roll your shoulders both front and back, but always end on a backward roll



## 2. Squats, standing

**Why:** Increases lower body strength, boosts heart rate, great for labor

**How:** With feet hip-width apart and toes pointing forward, inhale to squat your bottom back and down, and hold for 2 counts. As you exhale, press through your heels and the outside edge of your feet to lift yourself back to starting position. Repeat 8 times, building up to 20.

**Note:** Aim to get your thighs parallel to the ground while keeping your shins vertical



## 3. Butterfly Stretch, seated

**Why:** Gently stretches the inner thighs and opens the pelvis

**How:** Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet touching. Allow gravity to pull your knees towards the floor and hold for 15-30 seconds.

**Note:** Because your body is at a higher risk of hyperextension and injury (due to the hormone Relaxin that is released during pregnancy), never push knees to the floor with your hands. This is not recommended for those with Pubic Symphysis Dysfunction.

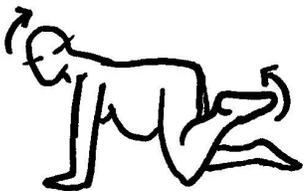


## 4. Wag the Tail, hands and knees

**Why:** Stretches hips and lower back, feels great

**How:** Gently get onto hands and knees, and flatten your back to tabletop position. Keeping both knees on the ground, lift your right foot and swing it out to the right side, while you look at it over your right shoulder. Then gently bring the right foot across the body to your left side, and turn to look at your foot over your left shoulder. Repeat 3 times and then switch sides.

**Note:** Go slowly to get the most out of this stretch; use a blanket or cushion under your knees for comfort

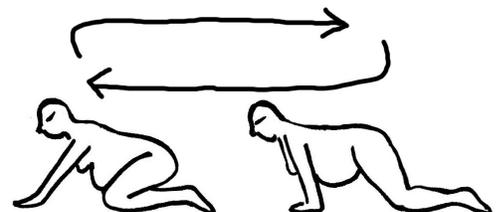


## 5. Full Body Circles, hands and knees

**Why:** Stretches the whole body

**How:** Starting from a tabletop position, gently circle your body back towards your feet, and then around and forward, aiming to use your full range of motion. Repeat 4 times and then reverse direction.

**Note:** – This is a great stretch first thing in the morning!



## 6. Pelvic Tilts, hands and knees



**Why:** Stretches lower back muscles which have shortened because of postural changes during your pregnancy

**How:** Starting from a tabletop position with a flat back, isolate the pelvis and gently tuck it under, then release it back to a flat back.

**Note:** Be sure that in your starting and ending point your back is in a neutral, flat position; this is not cat/cow, so do not sink the belly to the ground

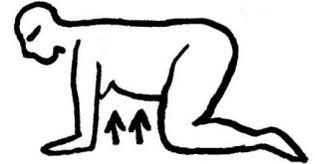
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## 7. Belly Breaths, hands and knees

**Why:** Strengthens the abdominal muscles by working against gravity and minimizes abdominal separation of the midline

**How:** In a tabletop position inhale and let your belly expand towards the ground. As you exhale, draw your bellybutton to your spine while tightening your abdominal muscles and hold for a count of 8. Repeat 3 times.

**Note:** Think of this as giving your baby a hug with your belly; your back stays parallel to the floor for the entire exercise



## 8. Belly Breaths, seated



**Why:** Strengthens the abdominal muscles and minimizes abdominal separation of the midline

**How:** While seated in a comfortable position, inhale and let your belly expand. As you exhale, draw your bellybutton to your spine while tightening your abdominal muscles and hold for a count of 8. Repeat 3-5 times.

**Note:** A belly breath is not the same as sucking your stomach in – when doing a belly breath your stomach squeezes in and down as if you were protecting it from being hit. You can tell if you are doing this correctly by placing your hands on your ribs. The ribs should contract as you exhale and draw your bellybutton back.

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## 9. Kegel Percents, seated

**Why:** Increases awareness and strength of the pelvic floor by tightening *and consciously releasing* the pelvic floor muscles

**How:** Sit comfortably. Inhale, and as you exhale squeeze the pelvic floor muscles as tightly as you can – this is 100%. Now release back to 0% or neutral. Now squeeze to about half the intensity, or 50%, now to 100%, then to 50% and back to 0%. Repeat this pattern 5 times: 0%-50%-100%-50%-0%

**Note:** The ideal kegels are done between 30% and 70% intensity, so use this exercise to get familiar with that range.

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## 10. Pelvic Floor Relaxation with Belly Breath, seated

**Why:** Builds muscle memory of keeping the pelvic floor open and relaxed which may help during the pushing stage of labor

**How:** Seated comfortably, inhale and let your belly expand. As you exhale draw your bellybutton to your spine and hold your abdominal muscles tight while releasing your pelvic floor. The idea is to keep your abdominal muscles tight and your pelvic floor soft and open. Work up to a 30-second hold of tight abs and relaxed pelvic floor muscles.

**Note:** This exercise is counter-intuitive, but you can master it with practice!

*If you have any questions about prenatal exercise, or to find out about Prenatal Personal Training, visit [www.readysetmamas.com](http://www.readysetmamas.com) or e-mail Jaymie Gerard at [info@readysetmamas.com](mailto:info@readysetmamas.com) today!*