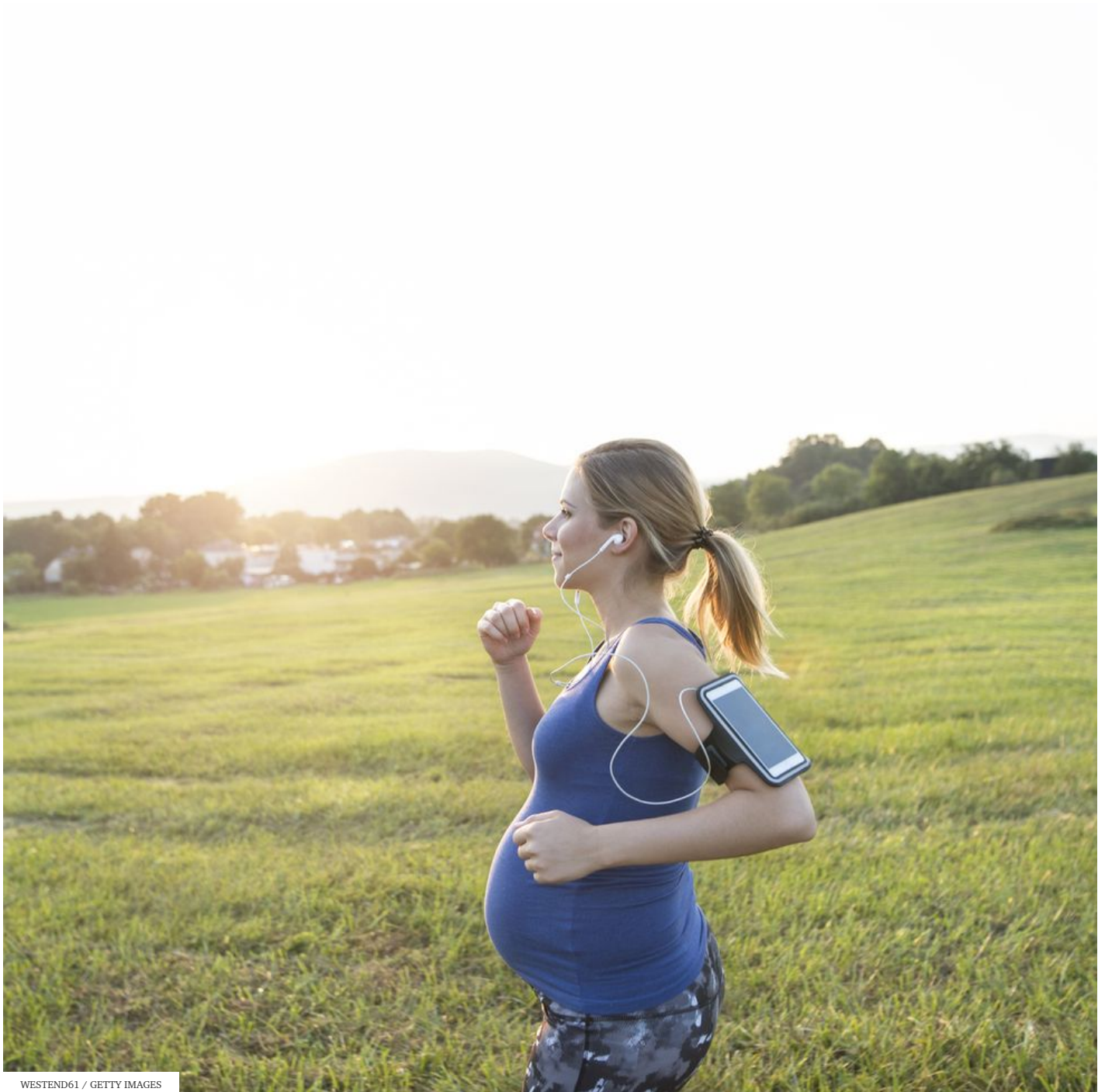


[SUBSCRIBE](#)[ACCOUNT](#)

# Everything You Need to Know About Running While Pregnant

Logging miles when you're expecting is generally safe for most, and experts encourage it.

BY [TEAL BURRELL](#) JAN 28, 2020



WESTEND61 / GETTY IMAGES

You're growing a tiny human inside of you, and you feel enormous, exhausted, nauseous, and like you need to pee every five minutes. Should you lace up or rest up? How will pregnancy affect your running? [Is running while pregnant safe?](#) Here's what you might expect when you're running while pregnant.

## Reasons to Run While Pregnant

Exercise throughout pregnancy—at least 20 to 30 minutes a day on most or all days—is recommended by the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#). Doing so reduces the risk of gestational diabetes, pre-term birth, pre-eclampsia (pregnancy-induced high blood pressure), having a baby with high birth weight, and the need for a cesarean section. It may also [improve your baby's brain development](#).

Plus, as any of us knows, running can make you feel better and relieve anxiety—over carrying and caring for a new baby, perhaps. And despite some rumors, it won't put you into labor, although it can help get you through it. “Women who exercise [during pregnancy] have easier, faster labors, they feel better postpartum, and their recovery is much quicker,” says [Erin Dawson Chalat, M.D.](#), an OB-GYN and runner in Maine.

*[Build your personalized and adaptive [training plan for FREE with Runcoach.](#)]*

But if you weren't a runner before getting pregnant, it can be a challenging time to start. “There are so many body changes; your center of gravity is off, it doesn't feel that good,” Dawson says. She recommends starting with [strength-building](#) and getting cardio from the elliptical or stair climber first.

ADVERTISEMENT - CONTINUE READING BELOW

---

## Can Running While Pregnant Hurt the Baby?

If complications in your pregnancy arise—such as bleeding, placental problems, or pre-eclampsia—running can be risky. Having multiples might also put you at risk for premature labor and make running a no-go.

But for those with uncomplicated pregnancies, experts say there's no harm in maintaining your exercise routine; running won't cause miscarriage or hurt the baby. “The baby is pretty isolated and protected during pregnancy,” Dawson says.

---

### RELATED STORY



[How Exercising During Pregnancy Can Help Your Baby](#)

---

You may start sweating earlier and faster, so be sure to hydrate well and wear loose-fitting clothing. It may be best to move indoors on hot or humid days, particularly in the first trimester when a high body temperature (above 102 degrees) may cause neural tube defects, although ACOG says it's unlikely exercise will increase body temperature to a dangerous level. Hot yoga, hot tubs, and saunas should be avoided, however, because they can quickly raise your body temperature above 102 degrees.

Be careful on uneven surfaces as your center of gravity changes. Concentrate on good form if you're strength training. The body produces the hormone relaxin, which loosens ligaments during pregnancy. Relaxin acts all over the body but has its most profound effects in the pelvis (so the baby can make its way out). Loose ligaments can cause pain in the pelvis, sacroiliac joint, or lower back and make you feel extra sore after a run. And you can be more prone to injury because looser ligaments aren't as stabilizing.

There's no need to monitor your [heart rate](#). Go by perceived exertion and keep a conversational pace. "If you can talk and feel okay, you can continue," Dawson says.

## How Far Can I Run When Pregnant?

Accept that your running will change. "You're going to get slower, and that's a given," says [Julie Levitt, M.D.](#), an OB-GYN and marathoner in Chicago. "But you may be able to spend the same amount of time active, you just won't cover as much ground." While ACOG suggests 30 minutes, Levitt says it can be an hour or longer if you feel up to it.

But it's not the time to push yourself: slow down, add walk breaks, or take extra recovery days as needed. "Give yourself some grace," says Lindsey Hein, a mother of three and runner in Indianapolis. "Don't hold yourself to a certain standard. Get started, see how it feels, and go from there."

---

### RELATED STORY

---



#### [The Best Maternity Activewear for Runners](#)

---

You'll maintain fitness even if you cut back, as your body is working plenty hard on its own—boosting both blood volume and heart capacity. "You're kind of getting super fit for your baby," says Nadya Swedan, a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist and author of *The Active Woman's Health and Fitness Handbook*. "If you do half of what you were doing before, you're probably going to end up at the same level of fitness when it's all over."

Thanks to increased pressure on your bladder, you may need to find new routes with places to stop and pee. Just don't try to avoid bathroom breaks by cutting back on fluids; proper hydration is a must for the health of you and your growing baby. You may need more water than usual, but "if your urine is clear, you're drowning," Levitt says. "Go for the pale yellow color and the feeling of satiation."

Eat easily digestible carbohydrates before running but give yourself extra time after eating before running because digestion may slow down in pregnancy. When you return, replenish with protein and electrolytes.

## Can I Run a Race While Pregnant?

If you were training for a race before you got pregnant, consult with your doctor about the best plan of action moving forward. If you decide to [run a race](#), keep in mind that you may find yourself running slower than your normal pace—and that's okay! Whether or not you run the race should be decided by you and your doctor. After all, the health of the baby is the most important thing and you can always run a celebratory race after giving birth.

## Can I Run in My Second Trimester?

For some, the first trimester is the hardest, thanks to the nausea and exhaustion. Both Dawson and Levitt say that running may help you feel better, if you can talk yourself into doing it. Of course, if you haven't been able to keep any food down, it's probably best not to run, Swedan says.

---

### RELATED STORY

---



#### [Ready to Run Beach to Beacon 7 Months Pregnant](#)

---

But the second trimester can be the “pregnancy honeymoon,” as nausea subsides and energy returns. After minimal running in the first trimester, Lindsay O'Brien, a former All-American at Yale and mother, increased her mileage in the second.

Still, as the body stretches and ligaments loosen to accommodate the growing baby, there may be some new pains. You may experience sacroiliac pain—pain in the lower back that may radiate down one side, or round ligament pain—a sharp pain or dull ache in the lower abdomen. Having a strong core can prevent or lessen sacroiliac pain, and a belly band may help with round ligament pain.

ADVERTISEMENT - CONTINUE READING BELOW

---

## When Should You Stop Running While Pregnant?

When the third trimester hits, many runners find they need to stop. “The first week of my third trimester, everything stopped running-wise,” O'Brien says. She had completed a 7-mile run a few days earlier but suddenly couldn't run at all due to back and pelvic pain.

In her first two pregnancies, Roxanne Lorenz, a mother of three in Minnesota, got to a point where she just didn't have the desire to run anymore. "Mentally, I was ready to be done," she says. A [2015 study of 110 competitive runners](#) found that only 31 percent ran during their third trimesters.

ADVERTISEMENT - CONTINUE READING BELOW

---

#### RELATED STORY

---



#### [Is It Safe to Run While Pregnant or Trying?](#)

---

But there are exceptions. In 2014, Lorenz started a running streak and didn't break it during her third pregnancy. Eliza Miron, a streaker for over 14 years, also ran through her pregnancy. To keep their streaks, both had to run at least one mile every day—including the day of delivery and the day after. Miron, who gave birth at home, did a slow jog five hours later with her husband at her side. Lorenz ran very slowly on a treadmill the morning she went into labor, delivered that afternoon, and ran laps around her hospital room the next evening.

Both Miron and Lorenz have run through injuries and illnesses, but they were willing to give up their streak if any complications arose or a cesarean section was necessary. "Obviously if it didn't work out, I'd rather have a healthy baby than make sure I got in my run," Miron says. They don't recommend such a strict regimen for non-streaking runners, and neither got approval from their doctors.

For the rest of us, Hein offers the more forgiving outlook she's gained after running through multiple pregnancies. "By the time I got to my third pregnancy, I was just like, 'Let it go.' If you feel good, and you want to run, go run. If you don't, don't."

O'Brien agrees and says to not put too much pressure on yourself. "I figured if I sweat every day or got in a little bit of activity every day, it's good for me, and it's good for the baby—even if it's 10 minutes around the neighborhood or a little spin on the stationary bike."

### **Returning to Running Postpartum**

After your bundle of joy arrives, it may be weeks before you're allowed to run. Although some experts say returning sooner may be okay, others recommend waiting to get cleared at your six-week postpartum checkup. "Your tendons and ligaments do remain a little bit relaxed and a little bit soft and injury prone until you're further out," Levitt says. If you feel good before that, go for a walk, try the elliptical, or do some light strength training.

---

#### RELATED STORY

---

[Here's How Long You Actually Need to Hold a Plank](#)



---

If you want to work your core, Swedan suggests doing five minutes of [planks](#) and bridges every day rather than longer sessions less often. But Dawson says not to stress about it. “Lifting the car seat with the baby in it takes a fair amount of core strength—a lot of twisting, a lot of oblique work—so just having a baby is pretty good exercise,” she says. But for issues like diastasis recti (abdominal separation) or urinary incontinence, see a specialist for recommendations and exercises to do.

---

RELATED STORY



### [Why Ab Separation Happens—And How to Fix It](#)

---

Be patient and don’t expect too much too soon. Like coming back from an injury, you’ll need to slowly build back up. “Take it easy on yourself. There’s so much going on, hormones and demands on your body,” O’Brien says. “I feel like running should be the last thing on the mind of brand new moms.” Not only has your body been through a lot, you’re probably not sleeping and breastfeeding can sap your energy even more. If you nurse, make sure to stay hydrated, get enough calcium and vitamin D, and wear a supportive sports bra (possibly in a larger size) when exercising.

---

RELATED STORY



### [9 Moms Get Real About Running Post-Child Birth](#)

---

But when things do start clicking again, you might discover an extra edge you didn’t have pre-pregnancy. “I definitely feel a lot stronger from going through the whole pregnancy and delivery,” says Desirae Piccoli, a New Jersey runner who gave birth in 2016. “My pain tolerance is a lot higher.” And Hein set a marathon PR nine months after having her first child.

Lorenz has also gotten faster with each pregnancy. “I just keep thinking, ‘If I can make it through labor, I can make it through this race.’”

We can’t argue with that.