

I would like to introduce a second installment on maintaining fitness while pregnant. Last month's article (<http://www.t2bb.com/newsletters.htm>) detailed that pregnant woman should not to make fitness goals rather minimize losses. Choose an exercise mode and program dependant primarily on the women's level of fitness before pregnancy.

This month's article will describe exercises that have worked with the 25 plus pregnant women I have trained in the last eight years. Expert I am not, rather, more of a high level provider of the understandings of movement to aid in the safety and efficacy of exercise on the mother and the fetus. The information within this article is based on my experience training women during pregnancy, research, and corresponding with local Obstetricist's. Ultimately, women who wish to initiate or continue a regular exercise program should do so ONLY in consultation with her obstetrician, midwife or appropriate physician.

Three main concepts and ideas that Training to be Balanced (T2BB) initially presents with any pregnant women are, first, establishing and maintaining the core. Second, reducing upper back and calf muscle pain, tightness, or cramping. Third, continuing a progressive digression to an exercise prescription.

If you don't get anything out from this article, understand how the Kegel exercise helps the core (which are rhythmic contractions of the pelvis floor muscles and the muscles that hold the bladder and many other organ in place).

The "one, two" as I call it. Lie on your back or sitting and contract your abdominal muscles. This is one. This is followed by the contraction of your pelvic floor muscles (the muscles that prevent you from going to the bathroom). This is two. These two work together but must be learned separately, which benefit women to "become aware of these muscles to contract and relax during delivery, to develop bladder control, and to return the body to prepregnant status." Even if you cannot feel them working, always attempt in standing, walking, sitting, and exercising...always, forever and especially post partum!

The next one in maintaining the core in what T2BB calls X-men (women). Use a three to four foot tube band with handles at the each end of it. Step on the middle of the tube and cross tube in front of body so tube forms an X in front the body. Hold handles next to body with thumbs up and elbows by sides. Keeping feet facing forwards always, side step laterally for as long as upright posture prevails and your "one, two" stays active. Repeat on the other side. One can also perform this with small therabands loops around your ankles and wrists.

The second concept is reducing upper back and calf muscle pain, tightness, or cramping. One of the reasons for upper back muscles soreness and fatigue is due to the increase of breast enlargement. The unusual weight pulls the shoulders forward and lengthens the upper back muscles as with breast-feeding as well. When the muscles are lengthening for a long time, hence the whole day, they become overworked and tight. A counter to this is stretching that particular area. There are great prenatal yoga sessions that offer excellent "feel good" stretching classes that are both economical and act as replacement for alcohol – stress reliever.

Along with prenatal yoga, an exercise that T2BB finds results is the bent over shoulder roll. Starting position: Stand over stability ball. Movement: 1. While bending at the waist to lower chest towards ball, roll arms to one side on ball. 2. Return to starting position. 3. Repeat to other side. 4. Repeat for prescribed number of repetitions (10 repetitions each side).

Cramping in the middle of the night tends to be from the calf muscles working endlessly to hold up the body up when the core fails and the lower back arches beyond one's own normal arch. T2BB calls this calf movement. Standing with one foot against a wall, step or board that is 45 degrees in angle which is ideal, lean into with a straight leg. While the foot is on an angle, pull toes of that foot upward, activating the front muscles of the shin, thus, elongating the calf muscle. Hold for 2 seconds and press down with the toes then back up. Repeat for 10 to 15 times several times a day.

The third concept is a continued progressive digression, which sort of seems like an oxymoron. As stated in the last article (<http://www.t2bb.com/newsletters.htm>) it is important not make fitness goals rather minimize losses. Women will bike, hike, ski during the first trimester and seem to "dog it" when really they need a shirt that says, "I am pregnant". If a female can slowly but progressive gauge decrements in overall fatigue, out of breath episodes or even

reduced minutes in a normal workout routine then that is what is considered healthy. The goal is not to gain but to maintain as much as you can for as long as you can.

If any questions arise about details of this article or for other exercises please feel free to email me at the below address and I will more than be happy to help.