Resource Column

Web Sites that Address Perinatal Physical Activity

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Abstract

In this column, the author provides examples of Web sites that address exercise and physical activity during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

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Exercise and physical activity are important components of health across the lifespan. Exercise and physical activity are encouraged during pregnancy to maintain health, increase energy, prevent excessive weight gain, and keep the body in shape for labor, birth, and beyond. Physical activity is also encouraged during the postpartum period, albeit women are advised to start very slowly and avoid overexerting themselves. Women who have an established exercise routine will be able to maintain higher levels of exercise during pregnancy and postpartum than women who have not exercised regularly prior to pregnancy.

The Web sites described below are a few samples that address exercise and physical activity during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Sites are designated as appropriate for health care providers or consumers.

For Consumers—Pregnancy

About.com – Exercising during Pregnancy
<http://exercise.about.com/library/weekly/aa031901a.htm>

This Web site provides detailed text with good information on exercising during pregnancy. The information is

appropriate for general consumer audiences. Relevant links are provided within the text to highlight information or to provide more in-depth information on a topic. The Web page also includes a discussion board, related resources, and links to other exercise guides. A link to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is provided. Information is included on starting an exercise routine and recognizing when to stop. A link to an 8-week workout for expectant mothers is provided, as well as a link to a general workout center (not pregnancy related). Interested persons can subscribe to an exercise newsletter. The only negative feature about this site is that it contains numerous advertisements, and the link to the about.com home page takes up considerable space on the page.

American Family Physician's Pregnancy and Exercise: What You Can Do for a Healthy Pregnancy
<http://familydoctor.org/handouts/305.html>

This Web page is a simple fact sheet in a question-and-answer format. The site is current, and the most recent update is given at the bottom of the page. Topics for a pregnant woman to consider include:

- Is it safe for me to exercise during pregnancy?
- How should I start an exercise program?
- What types of exercises are best when I'm pregnant?
- What should I be careful about?
- What problems should I tell my doctor about?

This site also provides links to the familydoctor.org home page. The site is easy to use. The format of the page allows for easy skimming of content.

Fit Pregnancy Magazine
<http://www.fitpregnancy.com>

This Web site is the home page for the magazine *Fit Pregnancy*. Links direct viewers to articles on nutrition, physical activity and fitness, and other maternity topics of interest to pregnant women. Articles may be emailed or saved. Some postpartum information is also included. Author information is provided for the health-related articles that are featured on the site. Information on ordering the magazine is also available.

For Consumers—Postpartum

Mothers in Motion's Quick Facts on Physical Activity and Breastfeeding
<http://www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/breastfeeding/exercise.htm>

This site is a one-page Web resource from Canada that offers quick tips on physical activity and breastfeeding. This page is part of a larger, comprehensive site sponsored by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAFAWS). Quick tips are listed in a bullet-type format, and links are provided to other relevant parts of the site. Address and contact information for the association are provided. The site is ideal for consumers. Content is also available in French.

For Consumers—Infants

Get Your Baby Moving: Five Guidelines to Encourage Physical Activity
http://www.parentspace.com/babies/physical/articles/0%2C10335%2C166661_416784%2C00.html

This Web page addresses physical activity for babies and toddlers. A highlight of this page is that it discusses physical restriction with the use of play seats, play pens, and other types of devices. While the site is geared toward consumers, professionals and research material are quoted in the text. The site is current and displays its latest update. Links to other parenting sites are provided. This site is part of the iVillage Network.

For Consumers—General

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Health and Fitness Info
<http://www.acsm.org/health%2Bfitness/index.htm>

This Web site provides basic health and fitness information and is sponsored by the American College of Sports Medicine. Topics include the following sections: generating interest, start slow, biggest risk is not starting, impact, convenience, skill, and social factor. Each of these areas address issues related to exercise and health. Guidelines are provided for healthy aerobic activity, calculating exercise heart range, and active-aging tips. A newsletter is

also available. The site does not contain information related to pregnancy or postpartum, but it is useful for general counseling and for beyond the pregnancy and postpartum period. Some of the motivational content may assist with maintaining a pregnancy or postpartum regimen.

For Professionals—Pregnancy

American Family Physician: Exercise during Pregnancy is Associated with Thinner Babies
<http://aafp.org/afp/20020515/tips/12.html>

This Web page summarizes a published article from the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. It is medically oriented and best suited for professional readers. The text is somewhat dense; however, it offers a good, detailed summary of the study and its findings.

For Professionals—Postpartum

The Importance of Behaviors to Postpartum Weight Change
<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/food/expfiles/topics/olson3/olson3overview.html>

This Web site links to an “Ask An Expert” nutrition column that is written by Christine M. Olson, PhD, RD, a well-known nutrition expert. The Web page is appropriate for professionals or educated consumers. The site is current and displays its latest update. The column is factual and presents research results with references. Links to other relevant columns are also provided. The site also offers links to questions and answers on the topic of the column, the food and nutrition home page, the Cornell Nutrition Works, the “Ask An Expert” home page, and an archive of previous topics. Readers of

the site can also provide feedback. Another link provides additional information on Dr. Olson.

Promoting Postpartum Exercise
http://www.physsportsmed.com/issues/2002/02_02/ringdahl.htm

This Web site is an article on postpartum exercise from the February 2002 issue of *The Physician and Sports Medicine*. A brief synopsis is provided, as well as more detailed descriptions. Helpful links are highlighted in the text. Detailed information is provided on the physician-author, and contact information is noted. References and a link to the journal are also provided. The article includes information on postpartum weight change, perceived barriers to exercise, and promoting change. The Web page also includes a personal story about Olympian bobsledder Alexandra Powe Allred and her return to exercise and training following her pregnancies.

For Professionals—General

Centers for Disease Control: Physical Activity and Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/health/physact.htm>

This Web page is the physical activity section of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) site. It provides general physical activity information. Some information on this site is appropriate for general consumer audiences; however, much of the site is presented at a high level. The site is easy to navigate. It is up-to-date and provides statistics on obesity by state for 1991, 1995, and 2000. The site also features exemplary state physical activity programs. There are also sections that detail “promoting better health through physical activity” and “nutrition and physical activity.” Links are provided to the main CDC site.

We're All Champions

Women who don't like to exercise just haven't found their sport. There's a physical activity that everyone can enjoy, even if it's bowling or pushing a baby around the block in a stroller. When you find your passion, you'll be a healthier, happier mom.

—Alexandra Powe Allred
Olympic Athlete and Mother