



**Congratulations! Pregnancy, birth, and parenting are so magical!  
Thank you for sharing this special time with us!**

Please take a moment to review the information below. Included are general guidelines for caring for your abdominal muscles during pregnancy, along with some other "do's and don'ts" of exercise during pregnancy. Of course, there is no substitute for your health care provider's advice. We encourage you to seek your health care provider's approval before exercising during and following pregnancy.

**General Guidelines:**

- If an exercise causes unusual ligament pain or sharp pain of any kind, stop and ask for a modification.
- As soon as you're uncomfortable lying on your stomach, stop.
- Do not perform a "Closed Twist" after 20 weeks, or sooner, if uncomfortable.
- Do not lay on your right side after 20 weeks.
- Do not lay on your back for ab work, bridging (aka. "back dancing"), or stretching after 20 weeks.
- If you have a history of miscarriage or have undergone in vitro fertilization, do not allow your body temperature to rise during your first trimester and seek additional guidelines for exercise during pregnancy from your healthcare provider.
- After 20 weeks of pregnancy, do not perform any exercise that incorporates squeezing a ball between your inner thighs.
- The hormone Relaxin is at its highest levels when you first become pregnant and before birth. Only stretch the point of gentle tension. This is not the time to master your split!
- [Avoid/keep abdominal work to a minimum during pregnancy, especially after the first trimester. Many abdominal exercises can increase your risk of rectus diastasis \(splitting of the rectus abdomen. Please refer to the following pages for our recommended exercises to be performed during the core work portions of our classes. These exercises should also be used as your core work substitute for at least 16 weeks postpartum \(longer in cases of rectus diastasis\).](#)

## Recommended Core Alternative Exercises During & Immediately After Pregnancy

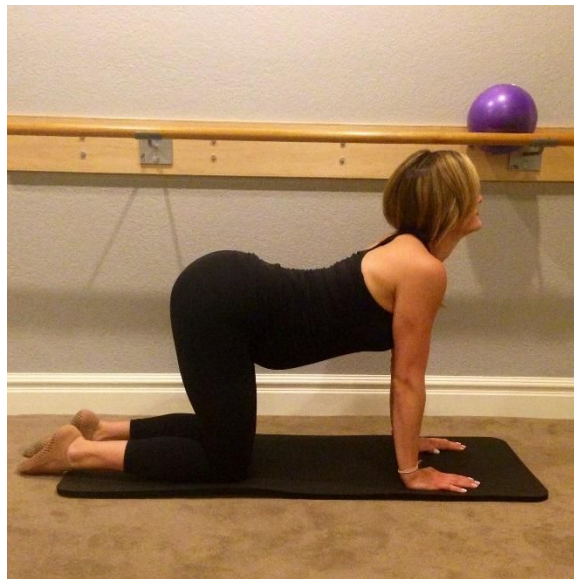
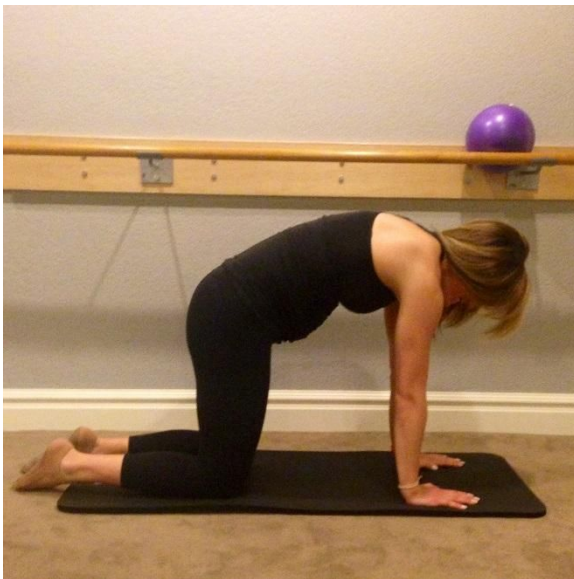
### **Bird/Dog**

- Starting from a prone table top position, with control, slowly extend right leg back into an arabesque while extending left arm straight ahead. Engage core and keep hips square, avoiding arch in the low back. Return to start position and repeat on alternate side.



### **Cat/Cow**

- Starting from a prone table top position, with control, alternate between “cat” position of rounding through the back and engaging the core, and “cow” position of arching the back with gaze high.



### Prone Fire Hydrant

- Starting from a prone table top position, lift bent right leg to the side, keeping hips and shoulders square.
- Can perform full range and hold at top to pulse. Repeat on alternate side.



### Heel Slides

- Using a ball behind the low back, or resting on your forearms, lie back with a half bend in the knees. Use control as you slide one heel out, extending the leg. Use control to draw the heel back in. Alternate legs.



## Kegels

- Kegels are always an excellent way to work on strengthening the pelvic floor - always important during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Perform these exercises while sitting in a comfortable position. Your movements should be minute, barely noticeable to an observer. If your instructor can see your chest move, inner thighs squeezing, or your glutes squeezing, it's too much - try to "do less", and cut your movements in half.
- **Kegel Exercise #1** (targets type 1 muscle fibers)
  - Imagine using your pelvic floor muscles to lift up a kleenex, or a kidney bean
  - Hold this muscle contraction for several seconds, then release.
  - Try to increase how long you can hold the "kleenex/kidney bean"
- **Kegel Exercise #2** (targets type 2 muscle fibers)
  - Use your pelvic floor muscles for quick contractions, like when you sneeze
  - Try rapid contractions/relaxations of these muscles - aim for 10x in 10 seconds.

## Modify Your Planks!

- Bring it up to the barre! (Do not perform on the floor, even from your knees)
- NO side planks

## Modify Your Push-Ups!

- Bring it up to the barre! (Do not perform on the floor, even from your knees)

## Do Some Squats!

- Squats (non-load bearing, no heavy weights please!) are an excellent pelvic floor strengthener during pregnancy. You know we barre babes love our squats - these are an excellent alternative to bridging!

## Exercises and Activities to Avoid

- Crunches
- Planks (except for on the barre)
- Side Planks
- Oblique Work
- Jumping (yes, unfortunately that means no mamas-to-be in BAR(RE)BOUND™ classes)

## **REMOVE the following:**

### Side Plank

- Lie on your left side and raise yourself onto your left forearm. Place your left shoulder directly above your left elbow, keeping your shoulders, hips and knees in alignment. Rest your right arm along the side of your body. Hold for several seconds, then lower yourself to the floor. Gradually work up to 10 repetitions. Repeat on the other side.



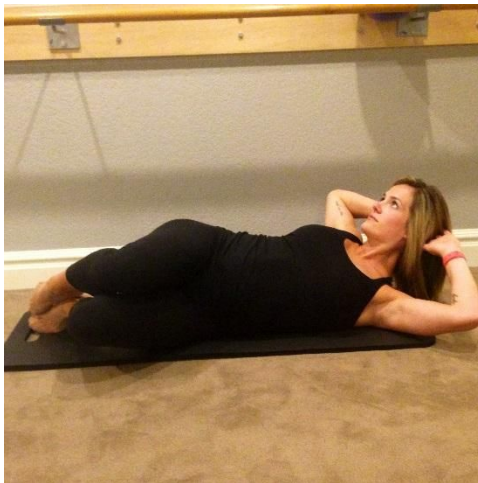
### **Kneeling Oblique Crunches**

- Kneeling, hold heavy weights in each hand, and perform side bend/oblique crunch. Use control on the drop and the lifting back to center. Alternate sides, or hold to one side and pulse.



### Side-Lying Crunch

- Lie on your left side with knees bent at a 30-degree angle to your hips. Roll over to the right only enough to lift your knees about 6 inches off the floor, your body weight resting on the back of your left shoulder and shoulder blade. Place both hands behind your head, fingertips touching but not clasped, elbows open. Curl torso up on the diagonal, bringing your breastbone toward your right knee. Your left shoulder will lift only slightly off the floor. Do 1 set of 6 reps, then switch sides, progressing to 12 reps for all 3 trimesters.



### Heel Drops

- Using a ball behind the low back, or resting on your forearms, lie back with a half bend in the knees. Bring knees up to tabletop position, and use control as you drop the right heel to the floor, and return to starting position. Alternate legs.
- Progression: Drop both legs at the same time. This is more difficult!

