

mama's got MUSCLE

T recently asked my healthy, strong, charming, articulate, feisty 75-year-old neighbor what it was like to be pregnant in her day. Here's some of what she told me:

Everybody—my doctor, my mother, my aunt—said, 'Don't move around too much. Don't raise your arms over your head; you'll shift the baby and maybe start contractions. Don't lift anything heavy. Don't stand on your feet too long. Don't run unless the house is burning down.'

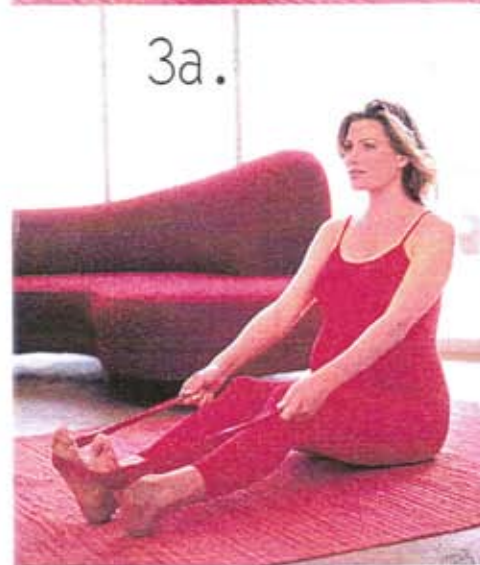
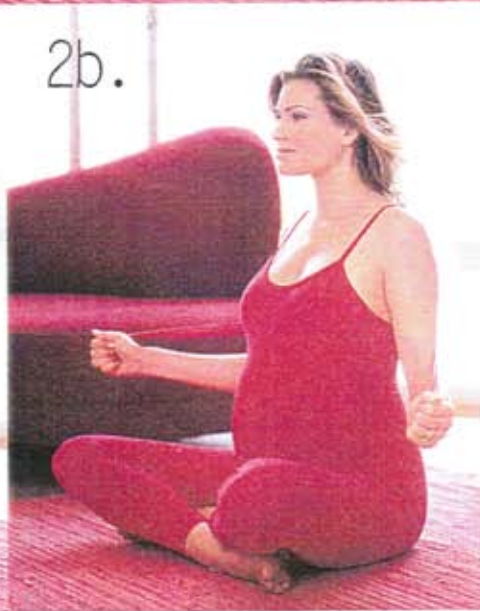
Fortunately, over the past several decades, there's been a sea change in attitudes about pregnancy and childbirth. Now we—the women having the kids—have started saying, "Hey, I'm strong; I'm healthy! I want to get up and out, and back to my life, my job, my workouts!"

The medical profession has changed along with us; obstetricians and family practice doctors are now saying it's good for a pregnant woman to keep fit and strong. Indeed, more and more, exercise is being promoted as an essential part of good prenatal care—just as important for feeling good and producing a healthy baby as eating the right foods, avoiding the bad stuff, getting enough sleep and going for checkups.

So if you listen to what your body is telling you and apply yourself to the exercises that follow, you'll be fine. In fact, you will be more than fine; you will be well-trained for the marathon of labor.

Pregnancy is a time to stay strong and active. Here's the program!
By Julie Tupler,
R.N.





The Exercises

1. Ab Elevator Tailor sit and place one hand on your abdomen, one hand on your lower back. Take a belly breath, contract abdominals to bring your belly to the 5th floor. Hold it there for 30 seconds [A]. Still holding, bring your belly button in to the 6th floor for 5 short pulses [B]. Release. Do 10 sets of 5 pulses. (*Strengthens abdominals.*)

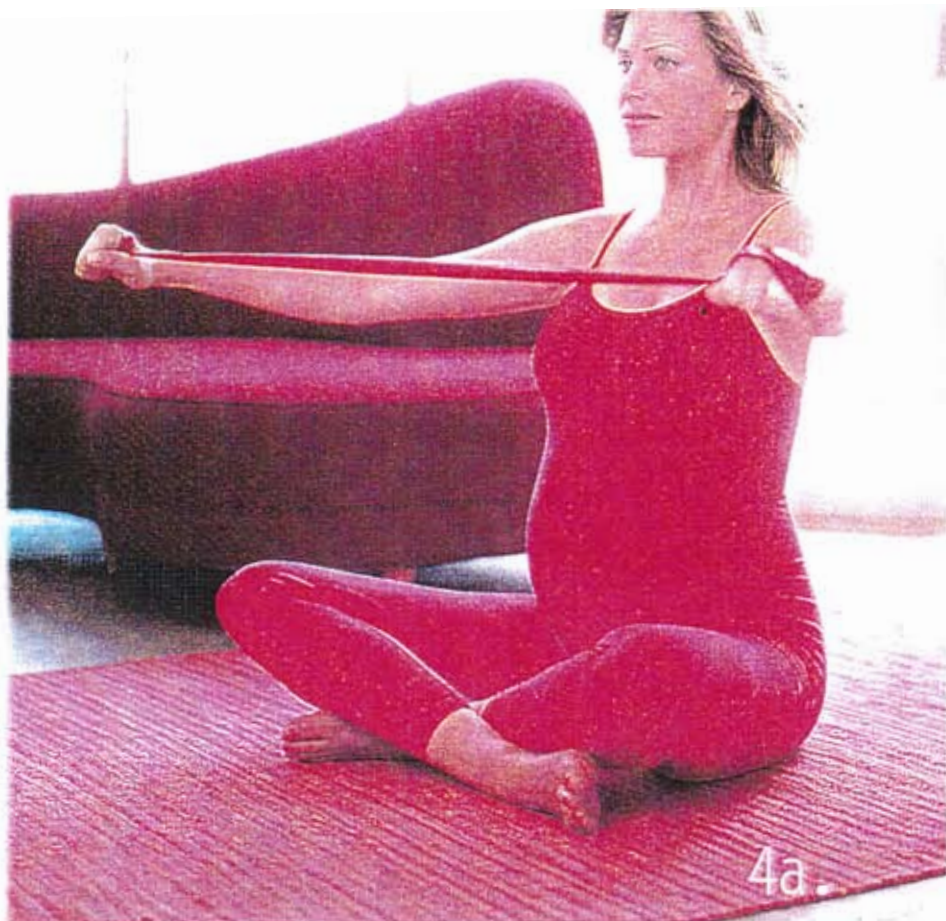
2. Lat Pull-down Tailor sit on the floor and hold resistance band behind your head with palms facing forward, elbows slightly bent at shoulder height [A]. Keep head, neck and spine in one line and pull elbows down to waist so band is behind your back [B]. Return to starting position, and repeat. (*Strengthens middle back and rear shoulders.*)

3. Seated Row Sit erect with legs extended in front of you, knees slightly bent. Wrap the band around both feet and hold one end in each hand, elbows bent close to your sides, palms facing thighs [A]. Keeping torso erect, squeeze shoulder blades together, then pull band back until elbows are behind you [B]. Return to starting position, and repeat. (*Strengthens upper and middle back and shoulders.*)

Pain Relief

While you're pregnant, you're somewhat more than normally susceptible to certain exercise reactions. By no means are you bound to get one of these pains while working out, and none of them indicates any danger to you or your baby. Just know how to recognize them and what to do if you experience any of the following:

- **Round ligament pain** As the uterus grows bigger, the round ligaments that hold it forward get stretched, so you might feel a shooting pain in the groin area if you stand up quickly. If you rest, it will go away. To avoid the pain, get up slowly, pushing yourself up with your arms.
- **Lag cramps** You might get a cramp in your calf while you're exercising, or even in the middle of the night while you're sleeping. Whenever this happens, flex your foot up and the cramp should go away. If you're getting a lot of leg cramps, talk to your doctor. You may need more calcium or salt in your diet.
- **Pubic pain** The hormone relaxin is loosening up your joints, especially the "symphysis pubic"—the line where the two halves of the pubic bone come together. Discontinue any exercise that causes pain in the pubic area.
- **Sciatica** This leg pain is caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve running down the back of the thigh. Due to postural and hormonal changes, pregnant women are especially susceptible. If you experience sciatica, bend the affected leg at the knee, keeping the other leg straight, and gently pull the sore leg across your body.



4a.

4b.

