

### **Prenatal Fitness Benefits**

Many women don't know that they can still exercise while they are pregnant. If you are an expecting mother and a healthy pregnancy, not only can exercise, you should exercise with your doctor's consent. Some of the benefits of exercising during your pregnancy are:

- \* Maintain safe weight during pregnancy
- \* Increased vitality and muscle strength
- \* Improved muscle balance
- \* Reduce chronic aches and pains including low back, shoulder/neck
- \* Lower risk of pregnancy related conditions such as hypertension and diabetes
- \* Better posture
- \* Stronger abdominal muscles, which are used during delivery
- \* Less risk of abdominal separation
- \* Shorter, less complicated labors
- \* Smoother, faster recovery after delivery

In order to achieve these benefits, current information indicates that exercise has to be *regular* rather than sporadic and *start before* you get pregnant. Aerobic exercise is recommended four to five days per week and strength training two to three days per week.

**Did you know that your baby can benefit from your exercise program?** Dr. James Clapp III's research has shown that babies can derive the following benefits from maternal exercise:

- \* Babies of exercising moms are "tougher" in that they don't require as much attention to the stresses of late pregnancy and labor.
- \* The newborns have an easier time adapting to life outside of the uterus and are inclined to be alert and easier to care for.
- \* The babies tend to be lighter and leaner than babies born to non-exercising moms. The infants will also remain lighter as they grow older.
- \* Their physical performance has a tendency to be better by their first birthday than their counterparts born to sedentary moms.

*"Exercising Through Your Pregnancy"* – James F. Clapp III, M.D.