Pilates for Pregnant Women

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Abstract

Pilates helps strengthen the body, improve flexibility and balance. In this paper I’m going to discuss how pilates is great for pregnant women. First I’m going to talk about how pregnancy can negatively affect ones posture. Next I’m going to talk about what pilates instructors should focus on during each trimester of pregnancy and what exercises to avoid. I will also include a conditioning program utilizing the Block System from BASI.
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Anatomical Position

It is very important for women to maintain good posture especially while they are pregnant. Hyperlordosis which is an excessive inwards curvature of the lumbar (lower) spine, commonly referred to, as swayback is very common in pregnant women. Pilates is a great way to help women protected and strengthen their body while they are pregnant.
Discussion

During a woman’s pregnancy her body is going through many changes. Many women have lower back pain or become hyperlordosis while they are pregnant. It is important to be aware of what is happening to ones body especially during pregnancy. Pilates is a great way to help women protect their posture and strengthen their bodies during a pregnancy. Pilate can benefit pregnant women in many ways. It can help them have a smoother pregnancy and also a fast recovery or help with decreasing strains or stress on the body. Pilates can also help with preventing pain or injuries during pregnancy.

In the first trimester of pregnancy hormones are triggered to help nourish the fetus. These hormones (Relaxin) can cause ligaments all over the body to become loose. This is important information for us pilates instructors to know and follow. Light stretching in the first trimester is ok, but too much can cause strains in ligaments or joints. I worked with a client named Helen Woon who complained about having pain in her pelvis. She described the pain as a sharp pain that would shoot from her pelvis to her leg. She told me the pain started after she had her first child. I told her to see a doctor and after come back and I would help her. When she came back from the doctors she told me the doctor had mentions something about sciatic pain. Sciatic pain can be caused by Relaxin, which causes instability in the pelvis. With a case like this it is important for an instructor to focus on exercises that will help balance the pelvis (adductor/abductors, external hip rotators/internal hip rotators, hip flexors/hip extensors, abdominal/back muscles). As the fetus grows it is important to prepare the body for the changes that are occurring to help relieve stress or prevent injury. During the first trimester it is important
to focus on core strength. Improving core strength will help support the abdominals, back, waist, and pelvis as one's stomach grows bigger during pregnancy. Core strength will also help with balance and stability. Some examples of exercises to focus on during a woman’s first trimester are Breathing with the Push Through Bar or Mini Roll Ups. Women during the first trimester can feel dizzy or nauseous. So it is important to avoid certain exercises that might cause dizziness or cause someone to get nauseous.

During the second trimester of pregnancy the woman’s stomach is going to grow a lot which can cause the pelvis to become more mobile. If the woman’s body is not strong enough to support the growing belly, she might naturally want to go into hyperlordosis, which can cause extra strain or stress on the body. In order to prevent this it is important to focus on posture, core stability and balance during the second trimester. Examples of exercises to focus on during the second trimester are footwork on the wunda chair or short box series. Both exercises are excellent in strengthening core stability without being in a supine or prone position. Tower and Roll Up are two examples of exercise to avoid during the second trimester.

During a woman’s last phase of pregnancy it’s important to start preparing them for labor, strengthen pelvic floor, focus on stretching and joint mobility. Some women may have a harder time breathing while exercising or their ankles might swell. So it’s important to keep them moving and keep ankles mobile to help with the swelling. Another symptom that is common in one’s third trimester is leg cramps. A little bit of stretching can help with the leg cramps.
## Conditioning Program

| **Foot Work** | - Parallel heels/toes  
- V position toes  
- Open V heels/toes  
- Calf Raises  
- Prances  
- Single leg heels/toes | **Notes** | Footwork on the Wunda Chair would allow client to sit up. For more support you can push the Wunda Chair against the wall allowing client to lean against wall for more stability |
| **Abdominal Work** | Thigh Stretch with RUB (cadillac) | **Notes** | Hip flexor stretch, abdominal control, trunk stabilization |
| **Hip Work** | Side lying, single leg (cadillac)  
- Changes  
- Scissors  
- Circles (forward and back) | **Notes** |  |
| **Stretches** | Sitting forward stretch/ butterfly | **Notes** |  |
| **Full Body Integration** | Saw | **Notes** |  |
| **Arm Work** | Arm Standing Series (Ped A Pul)  
- Extension  
- Adduction  
- Up/Dow | **Notes** |  |
| **Leg Work** | Squats | **Notes** |  |
| **Lateral Flexion** | Mermaid | **Notes** |  |
| **Back Extension** | Cat Stretch | **Notes** |  |
Conclusion

In conclusion there are many ways pilates can benefit a pregnant woman. Pilates can help strengthen and protect stressed or strained muscles, joints, or ligaments during pregnancy. It is important to understand the changes our bodies go through so we can prepare for the future and help prevent complications, injuries, or pain. Pilates is great for before, during and after pregnancy.
Bibliography


Pilates for Every Trimester
(http://www.fitpregnancy.com/exercise/prenatal-workouts/pilates-mama-pilates-everytrimester)

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