

P R E G N A N C Y U N L E A S H E D T H E P R E N A T A L S E R I E S

Shock.

That pretty much sums up my entire first pregnancy experience. Nine months of shock.

Shock that two people can create another person.

Shock that an organ in my body knows exactly what to do.

Shock that said organ is holding a human being.

Shock that I, alone, am growing a human.

Shock that I am not alone. That millions of other women have also grown humans.

Shock that my baby has the hiccups and I can feel it.

Shock that my decisions, my actions, my mindset, my health, and my lifestyle form this little person's life.

I always told myself that I'd be a super healthy pregnant woman. That I'd workout, eat the right foods, and do whatever feels right. And with the exception of some chocoholic tendencies, that's exactly what I've done.

I was prepared for maintaining my healthy eating habits and exercise lifestyle. I wasn't prepared for the body changes, nausea, exhaustion, bone heaviness, congestion, and all the lovely other symptoms of pregnancy. Don't get me wrong, I've had an excellent pregnancy. I cannot complain. The first trimester was rough with indigestion and exhaustion. The second trimester was exactly what everyone said: cute bump and more energy. The third trimester helped me remember that exhaustion, with a much larger belly. It's been pretty textbook for me. But the biggest lesson I've learned (besides trying to avoid being in your third trimester during summer heat) is that every single woman is different.

Each woman's bump grows in a different shape and size. Each woman's symptoms come and go at different times. Each woman feels a wide range of emotions. But there is a common understanding. Even if you look and feel different, you're all going through the same thing. You've all had nightmares about delivery. You've all been told horror stories. You've all felt a kick and wondered if it was the baby or gas. You've all worried about being a mother. You've all been wracked with insomnia, imagining what your little baby is going to look like, how this whole thing is going to go down, and if you're going to immediately fall in love like everyone says you will.

There's one thing that's kept me sane throughout this whole magical, scary, what-was-that experience: movement.

Movement in my body keeps me sane mentally and physically. Walking. Yoga-ing. Breathing. Hip circling on the stability ball. Lifting light weights. All of it has helped me get through whatever emotion I was feeling. All of it has helped me maintain my strength. All of it has helped me release the tension in my neck, back, and hips. Without movement, my sanity would suffer.

This is why I created the Pregnancy Unleashed Prenatal Series. These workouts have kept me sane. These workouts have kept me strong. These workouts have made me feel like me.

These workout videos are made for your pregnant body. I go slowly, easily, and explain why we are doing each exercise. We do lots of stretches. We build strength where it's needed the most. We hit those sore spots. We release any built-up tension.

Once upon a time, the medical community advised against exercise during pregnancy. They worried about increasing body temperature, raising the risk of congenital anomalies, and focus on repairing maternal skeletal

muscles instead of fetus during and after exercise. But recent studies show no increase in pregnancy loss, late pregnancy complications, abnormal fetal growth, or adverse neonatal outcomes.

A majority of women are not given recommendations on a minimum daily amount of exercise by their practitioners, so studies have shown that nearly half of pregnant women exercise 30 minutes three times per week and nearly a quarter of healthy, previously active women stop exercise or reduce it greatly during pregnancy.

Prenatal exercise maintains and can even improve cardiovascular and muscular fitness and lowers the incidence of excessive maternal weight gain, gestational diabetes, pregnancy-induced hypertension, varicose veins, and low-back pain. Plus, women who continue weight-bearing exercise during pregnancy tend to have easier, short, less complicated deliveries. If that doesn't win you over, I don't know what else will.

Before making this program for you, I studied prenatal and postnatal exercise as part of my American Council on Exercise (ACE) personal trainer certification. If you have any questions or concerns about exercise during pregnancy, please do not hesitate to email me to ask me. Regular concerns include fetal risks (blood flowing away from fetus during exercise), increased fetus heart rate, and intrauterine growth restrictions. Studies have debunked these theories, showing that light-moderate exercise of approximately 30 minutes per day has far greater advantages for mother and fetus.

You may be feeling many changes in your body. That's because of the enormous amount of hormones circulating throughout your body. Relaxin and progesterone are released to expand the uterine cavity and soften the ligaments surrounding the joints of pelvis (as well as your back, hips, and legs). You may feel some stress on your joints, your center of gravity shifting as your belly grows upward and out, and low-back pain. It's

important to be safe when moving into different postures or positions during exercise as well as every day activities. For example, that wonderful stretch that's normal for you may pull a muscle now.

The hormones signal relaxation and reduced responsiveness in most if not all of the smooth muscle cells in a woman's blood vessels. This can cause lightheadedness, nausea, fatigue, cravings, constipation, bloating, and frequent urination. You may notice that laying on your back becomes unavailable to you at one point, as it may result in relative obstruction of venous return. You've probably read in the pregnancy books and online articles about sleeping on your left side. Yes, this gives you and your fetus better blood flow, but it's important to talk to your doctor or midwife about any symptoms or questions you may have. For example, I asked my French midwife (as I live in France and am delivering my first baby in France at the moment) about this theory and she told me that it's important for me to lay or sleep however I feel comfortable and that no studies have shown any blockages to me or the fetus if I lay on my right side or back. For me personally, I didn't start having a drop in blood pressure when I laid on my back until I was approximately 32 weeks pregnant. Even then, it depends on the day and how I'm feeling. Remember, everyone is different.

When it comes to exercise, the general theory is that you can continue what you did before you were pregnant. Guidelines to follow include doing light-moderate aerobic exercise, using lighter weights and doing higher repetitions, avoiding isometric (holding in one position) or heavy-resistance exercise, limiting excessive stretching because of ligament laxity, avoiding inversions and twists, and doing moderate exercise most days of the week. Walking and aquatic exercises are recommended most. It's important to ingest additional calories for any you may burn during exercise and stay hydrated every single day. Pelvic floor exercises are known to help with urinary incontinence. Any pains you had before pregnancy are likely to act up during pregnancy, so focusing on posture and pelvic exercises are imperative during this time of growth.

Exercise has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, fatigue, and stress during pregnancy. Raise your hand if you've experienced any of this. That's what I thought. Postpartum/postnatal and maternity blues affect 10-13% of women (though many think that should be a higher number).

Sleeplessness, progesterone withdrawal, removal of the placenta, and a rise and steep drop in cortisol (as well as other hormones) contribute to this. More exercise = mood stability.

The exercise and stretching videos in the Pregnancy Unleashed Prenatal Series can be combined with prenatal yoga classes, walking, and any other safe moderate aerobic exercise you may love or done completely on your own. I focus on your arms, back, hips, legs, pelvic area, and more. You can do the yoga, stretching, and stability ball exercises as much as you want. I recommend doing the arms and back, hips, and full body workout a few times per week. Listen to what your body is craving and follow that. Personally, I did all of the exercises and stretches in these videos multiple times per week as well as walking every day. Long walks really helped my mind and body feel amazing. I highly recommend swimming when pregnant as a great exercise to do without putting pressure on your joints.

Be kind to yourself. This was one of my most difficult understandings during pregnancy. I always wanted to do, act, and be like I was before pregnancy. I had to work on accepting that my life and body during pregnancy were different. To embrace the changes. To stop fighting it. To sleep when I needed to. To eat all the mangoes I wanted (my main craving). To let myself cry. To let myself feel. To accept that I couldn't do downward dog for four months. To welcome help. To let go of the pressure of being enough. To let go of the guilt. To complain when I needed to, even though I knew how incredibly lucky I was compared to others.

This is why I call this program Pregnancy Unleashed. Unleash any and all expectations. Unleash your desires. Unleash your feelings. Unleash your beliefs. Unleash yourself.

Wishing you a beautifully peaceful and unleashed pregnancy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom that loops back under the name.

Diana Antholis

Author | Mind-Body Coach | ACE Personal Trainer

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Disclaimer: If your physician hasn't cleared you for exercise or if you choose not to consult a physician, by purchasing a video by Diana Antholis you acknowledge that you are participating in these videos at your own risk. No one wants to get hurt, exercise is supposed to be fun. Please make sure you are adequately fueling yourself (aka eating enough calories with a well-balanced diet) so you don't pass out. That's the last thing anyone wants. Please do make every effort to talk to your doctor, midwife, or pregnancy consultant before doing any exercise.

Source of medical statistics and studies: Pre- and Postnatal Exercise, Chapter 23, ACE Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist Manual