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Maternal and fetal benefits of regular exercise and physical activity during pregnancy

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This session will present recent evidence supporting the benefits that an active lifestyle, including regular exercise and physical activity have on a woman and her child, both during gestation and after. An overview of the physiologic changes that occur in multiple systems during pregnancy will be presented along with instruction on safe exercises, parameters of exercise, body mechanics instruction and exercises to avoid during gestation and in the immediate post-partum period. Benefits such as assisting in maternal weight management, improved tolerance of the labor process, positive effects on fetal size and improved ability to recover from both vaginal and caesarian deliveries will be presented. Pelvic floor health will also be included in the discussion. The session will identify some of the common neuromusculoskeletal conditions (diastasis recti, diastasis symphysis pubis, etc.) that may occur as a result of fetal growth, a shifting uterine position during pregnancy, the delivery process and adjustments in the post-partum period. Suggested interventional strategies for these conditions will also be presented.

Biography

Caterina Abraham is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at Wheeling Jesuit University. She has 20 years of physical therapy practice experience with the last 14 being in the academic setting. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Physical Therapy (1994) and a Master's Degree in Public Health (2004) from West Virginia University. She earned her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree (2009) from Temple University. She has authored a chapter on pre-natal and post-partum exercise in the textbook titled: *Clinical Pediatric Physical Therapy: From the NICU to Independent Living* by Mark Drnach.

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