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Running for Two: Tips for Expectant Runners



For many fit women, giving up their exercise routines is more painful than pregnancy itself. On that token, runners are by far the most reluctant to give up their work-out. That was exactly the case with **Tara Zimliki, founder of Tara's Boot Camp** and a mother of two from New Jersey. Tara ran through a good deal of her pregnancy. In fact, she ran the New York Marathon while she was 8 months pregnant! Tara swears by the benefits of running and even says, "My pregnancy was much healthier because of it."

Tara offers some important steps to take before running while pregnant:

1. Consult with your doctor

- It may come as a surprise for some, but doctors actually recommend running while pregnant.

Research shows that women who exercise during pregnancy suffer less lower-back pain, gain less weight, and have better mood and sleep patterns. After pregnancy, they're also less likely to suffer from postnatal depression and will lose weight more rapidly.

- Once your doctor says you're clear to run while pregnant, there are some very important precautions to take. "Stretching should be done very cautiously and much more thoroughly when you are pregnant," Tara advises. A woman's ligaments become softer while she is pregnant so it is important to be extra careful when you're hitting the pavement.

- Listen to your body much more closely when you are pregnant and notify your doctor with any changes. However small the changes may seem, make sure to keep your doctor informed about your pregnancy as well as your work-out routine. Although you may have been an avid runner prior to getting pregnant, you may need to drastically alter up your exercise regimen anywhere from the first to the ninth month.

2. Take it easy

- Pregnancy is a time for mental and physical preparation. One of the most beneficial gains from running is that it teaches you about pain. Runners have reported a significantly higher tolerance to pain during childbirth than non-runners.

- Running is an excellent way to clear your head, which is essential for stressed mothers-to-be. "Pair your workout with an equally calming, yet less strenuous activity, like yoga," suggests Tara.

- Everyone is different, so do what's right for you. Most experts agree a woman can run for up to one hour, three to four times a week, at a moderate to somewhat hard intensity. When running is no longer possible, move on to walking and other cardio activity for the remainder of your pregnancy. Tara also adds, "If you're not an avid runner, the eighth month of your pregnancy is probably not a good time to start."



3. Eat well

- The basic principles of healthy eating remain the same during pregnancy, but a runner deserves special attention. Nutrition is one of the most important aspects of your pregnancy and you should take it even more seriously when you're still exercising.

- Eating healthy during your pregnancy is crucial -- but even more so if you are a runner. Running is one of the most strenuous physical activities and requires a well-rounded diet. "Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein for a healthy baby," says Tara.

- Not only will running help clear your mind, but it will make you feel better about your weight. "My weight gain was right on target -- not too much and not too little," says Tara.