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- [Week of June 19](#)
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- [Week of June 5](#)
- [Week of May 29](#)
- [Week of May 22](#)

Week of June 12

### POOL PARTY PREGNANCY TIPS

iParenting



An Article From iParenting Media

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By Melinda Copp

Summertime means getting outside, enjoying the beautiful weather and trying to keep cool, especially for moms-to-be. After all, gaining 25 or more pounds doesn't exactly keep you cool and comfortable. But just because the sun is hot doesn't mean you have to sit in the air-conditioning all day.

Pregnancy is a great time to hang out at the pool. Sure, you might not feel sleek and graceful in your pregnant figure, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy yourself. Whether you want to get some exercise or just cool off and relax, consider the following tips for hitting the pool while expecting.

#### The "Perfect" Suit

Bathing suit season is hard enough without being pregnant. But sporting a big belly can make finding the perfect bathing suit even more difficult. According to Brette Sember, author of *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom* (Barricade Books, 2005), comfort is the key.

Make sure your suit fits well and has enough room to accommodate your expanding frame. Otherwise you'll be constantly tugging and picking at the fabric and you'll never feel comfortable. Racer back suits are especially easy to wear, and suits with built-in bra support are essential, says Sember. And finding the right suit is worth it because swimming in a T-shirt will most likely be uncomfortable.

"T-shirts and shorts are not a viable option if you plan on going in the water because they get wet and cling and show your undergarments," says Sember. But you have several bathing suit options in the maternity section and on the regular bathing suit rack.

Amy Robertson, a mom from Seattle, Wash., opted for a non-maternity tankini-style suit that was two sizes larger than what she regularly wore. "A tankini can grow with you since the top basically stretches out," says Robertson. "That ruins the suit for future use, but that was OK for me."

When hunting for the perfect suit, don't be afraid to try on several different styles, both maternity and regular. Finding the right suit is important because going to the pool and swimming should be as relaxing and stress-free as possible.

#### Staying Fit

Swimming is a great prenatal exercise for a number of reasons. According to the American Pregnancy Association in Irving, Texas, swimming is the safest exercise for pregnant women because it keeps your muscles toned without stressing your joints and it gets your blood pumping while the water keeps you cool.

Jen Matlack, a mom from Connecticut, got pregnant in April and swam faithfully all summer. To work out, she did a combination of breaststroke laps, treading water and stationary exercises where she moved her arms and legs. "I felt fit, very relaxed and very in touch with my body and the baby," says Matlack.

If you want to get a water workout, try swimming laps at a medium pace, treading water or walking laps around the shallow end. The water will create resistance and carry some of your weight at the same time. You can also consider taking a water aerobics class especially for expectant moms.

Diane Mehta, a mom from Brooklyn, N.Y., took a swim class with Aquamom, a mom-to-be pool fitness program in New York City. It helped her relax and stay fit, but it was also a good way to meet other moms-to-be. "Non-pregnant people and new parents don't care about your pregnancy stories," says Mehta. "Only other women who are pregnant at the same time want to hear it, so you can vent."

#### Relax and Unwind

Carrying the extra weight of your belly around is a tough job any time of the year, but it takes even more effort when the weather is hot and humid. Swimming, or even just sitting in a pool, is an excellent way to refresh and keep cool.

To relax while she was pregnant, Rachel Bear, a mom-to-be in Houston, Texas, swam several nights a week at her YMCA. When she got in the water, she felt like she could swim all her concerns and stress away. "Swimming was good because it made me weigh less for just a little while," says Bear. "Floating around in the pool felt great after being on my feet all day. Although it probably had some physical benefits, I think the best part was that it let me get all my pregnancy tension out."

The cool water feels good on aching joints and swollen ankles. And the water gives you buoyancy, making you feel weightless and graceful despite the big belly. However, steer clear of the hot tub. The hot water may feel good, but it can raise your body temperature to levels that are dangerous for the baby.

#### Sunbathing

According to the American Pregnancy Association, your skin may be more sensitive to the sun's UV rays while you're pregnant. You may develop hives or a heat rash, so make sure you limit your exposure and always wear sunscreen.

Getting a tan might also make you more susceptible to melasma, the dark patches that often appear on the face and around the eyes during pregnancy. Therefore, consider using a sunless tanning lotion to get a golden glow. Again, because your skin may become more sensitive during pregnancy, always test the tanning product on a small area before applying it all over.

Pregnant or not, you should always wear at least an SPF 15 sunscreen when you're out in the sun. This keeps your skin healthy and helps minimize your chances of skin cancer and premature aging.

#### Stay Safe

Pool safety is extremely important when you're swimming for two. Use caution to avoid slips and falls when you're moving around the wet pool area. And if you feel fatigue, dizziness, heart palpitations, shortness of breath or any pain while you're exercising in the pool, then you should stop. These are signs that you're overdoing it.

Always wear sunscreen and pack a lightweight cover-up, sunglasses and hat in your pool bag. And if you feel like you're starting to burn or if you develop a rash, head for the shade.

Also beware of becoming dehydrated. Dizziness, headaches and muscle cramps are all signs of dehydration, which can cause severe problems such as preterm labor.

"Not drinking enough can have serious consequences," says Dr. Aneema Van Groenou, author of *The Active Woman's Guide to Pregnancy: Practical Advice for Getting Outdoors When Expecting* (Ten Speed Press, 2004). "If you are dehydrated, you are more susceptible to heat exhaustion, cold illness and altitude illness. Dehydration is also the most preventable cause of preterm labor. If you are dehydrated, you are also more likely to suffer from headaches, urinary infections, constipation, dry skin, hemorrhoids and fatigue. So you should take drinking seriously, especially during pregnancy."

Dr. Van Groenou says to drink at least 10 glasses a day. "If you are exercising, drink about a liter of water every hour," she says. "Drink even if you don't feel thirsty. Once you feel thirsty, you are already somewhat dehydrated. The best way to keep track of your hydration is to watch your urine: If it is dark yellow or if you urinate less than once every four hours, you need to drink more water."

The summer sun is hot, your belly is getting bigger and bigger every day and there's no reason why you shouldn't spend the afternoon relaxing at the pool. When you use these tips for finding the right bathing suit, getting some exercise and staying safe, every day can be a pool party.

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