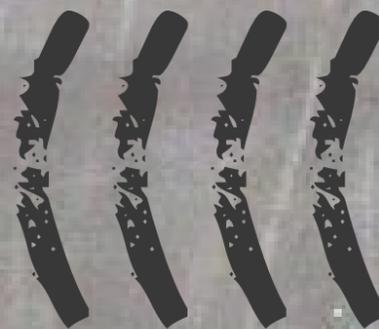


# BURPEES AND THE BUMP

CROSSFITTING WHILE PREGNANT HAS RAISED THE IRE OF MANY A SCEPTIC. CROSSFIT PROFORM OWNERS, KERRY AND SEAN TANGNEY, HAVE SPENT A LOT OF TIME INVESTIGATING THE TOPIC. AT 16 WEEKS PREGNANT, KERRY HAS A VESTED INTEREST, SO HERE'S WHAT SHE HAS TO SAY... PHOTOGRAPHS BY SEAN TANGNEY



SUBSTITUTE  
**BOX JUMPS:** lower the box height or do step ups. Do these against a wall for stability if you need to.





**SUBSTITUTE  
TOES-TO-BAR:**  
do knees-to-elbows

Obviously, ensuring our member's safety is a priority and so each pregnancy is closely watched by all of our coaching staff, who are prepared and educated about how to effectively modify CrossFit to accommodate the varying stages of pregnancy. To date, all of our expectant mums are looking strong and healthy and can regularly be seen keeping up with the usual classes.

"My coaches have been a great support, vacillating between cautioning me not to push too hard and encouraging me to keep going where appropriate," says Simone Fredericks, who at the time of writing is 36 weeks. "I did not want to feel isolated or excluded during my pregnancy, so for the most part it has been business as usual, which I have appreciated."

Based on the research we've done and our experiences with members, what follows is our recommendations on how CrossFit be modified in order to maintain a healthy and safe pregnancy.

First and foremost, CrossFit is not something that can be started for the first time while pregnant. Our recommendations below are based on the assumption that you have been doing CrossFit regularly for at least four months before falling pregnant and can continue under the supervision of a trainer that has knowledge and experience of training pregnant women. If you have not done CrossFit (or any other form of exercise) before falling pregnant, there are other forms of exercise that you should rather consider. It is essential that every woman who wants to do any exercise, especially CrossFit, consults her gynaecologist before starting to exclude any possible contraindications.

## FIRST TRIMESTER (1-12 WEEKS)

Your biggest adversary in the first trimester is potential nausea and tiredness. If you can motivate yourself to actually get to training then that is already an achievement.

If you don't normally eat before you train, try and snack on a banana or something light to keep the nausea at bay.

Fredericks assures us that, despite the tiredness, a good workout really helped her to feel more energised during the day. It also helped to curb her morning sickness.



### SUBSTITUTE

**PULL-UPS:** do strict pull ups using a band or do inverted ring rows.

**PUSH-UPS:** do push-ups standing against a wall or do parallette push-ups.

**RING DIPS:** use a band on the rings to support you or use parallette bars to do traditional style dips.

Maintaining a regular exercise programme while pregnant has been actively encouraged by doctors and midwives for decades. However, maintaining CrossFit while pregnant seems to be an altogether different and somewhat controversial story.

American Lee-Ann Ellison experienced this first-hand last year when she posted pictures of herself doing CrossFit two weeks before her due date. Apart from a few admirers, the general response was one of criticism and abuse.

So what exactly is the truth surrounding this? Is it really possible to continue to CrossFit safely throughout your pregnancy? We believe that it is possible, but mums-to-be need to have a realistic and flexible

approach to their training. Every person is different and every pregnancy is different too. Varying fitness levels and experience play an important role in maintaining what is comfortable for your own body and your own pregnancy.

A 2008 study published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* found that women who continued to do weight-bearing exercise during their pregnancy gained less weight, deposited less fat and had a lower risk of heart conditions than those who did not.

We currently have four members in the family way at CrossFit ProForm, and we are delighted that they been very enthusiastic and open to the idea of continuing their training with us.

In the first trimester, you aren't hindered by a growing bump so you should still be able to do most of the exercises you were doing before.

For most women, it's ok to continue to lie on the back until the 12-16 week mark, so you can still do sit ups, planks and toes-to-bar, but stay off the GHD.

When it comes to weightlifting, you can continue to use your normal weights this trimester, just don't go up in weight or attempt any PB's.

Many books advise you to keep your heart rate below 140 bpm. However, specialist gynaecologist and obstetrician, Ethem Divanovic, confirms that your blood volume increases when you become pregnant, so trying to keep your heart

rate at 140 bpm when exercising doesn't allow you much room for manoeuvre and is not really realistic. Oestrogen promotes the left ventricle muscle in your heart to grow in size and strength by about 20% to accommodate the extra blood flow and this alters your resting heart rate and makes assessing your training intensity by pulse rate alone unreliable.

Rather than focusing on your heart rate, pay attention to your breathing. Your body will advise you very quickly on what feels right and what doesn't. Watch carefully that you don't hold your breath.

You'll also find you need to take longer and more frequent rests between reps.

The extra progesterone in your system has already raised your core temperature

so make sure you don't get overheated. Remember to drink lots of water before, during and after your workout. Extra progesterone also increases your sensitivity to carbon dioxide, which is why you seem to get breathless quicker in early pregnancy.

Although it's important to remember that this is a time for maintaining your fitness, don't work out until the point of exhaustion.

## SECOND TRIMESTER (13 TO 28 WEEKS)

More changes will be occurring in your body during this time and workouts will need to be adjusted accordingly. Your ligaments will begin to soften so you will need to take



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**ROPE CLIMBS:** do beginner rope climbs. Sit at the bottom of the rope. Pull yourself to a standing position using your legs as little as possible. 3 x beginner rope climbs equals 1 x normal rope climb.

extra care with any movements that are past the body's normal range of motion.

At 32 weeks pregnant, Ilona Brandt confirms that she has experienced a lot more energy in her second trimester and has generally felt quite strong. However, she has had to modify certain exercises due to her growing bump getting in the way. Rule out any exercises that require lying on the back, particularly towards the end of this trimester.

The uterus will be large enough to cut off the blood supply to the baby, so alternative core exercises will need to be implemented – like plank holds.

Toes-to-bar can be switched to knees-to-elbows.

Avoid crunches and sit-ups.

You can still do burpees, just modify them to stop in an elevated push up position on the ground before standing up again, as opposed to lying on your tummy.

Do push-ups until you can't any more, then do them against a wall, on an elevated surface or on parallel bars. You can also move onto your knees to take the weight off your back.

Kipping pull-ups are not advised, so consider using bands to do strict pull-ups or switching to rings rows as an alternative.

Safety needs to be a priority and your centre of gravity will have shifted so, unless you are a very experienced CrossFitter, rather play it safe and stay away from anything that you can fall off. The ring rows are a better choice.

In addition, box jumps can be substituted with step-ups. Preferably position the box against a wall so you can hold onto the wall for extra balance and stability.

Now is definitely the time to cut out rope climbs and any inverted exercises like handstand push-ups or skin the cat.

You can continue running if it is still comfortable, otherwise consider using a rowing machine or an airdyne.

"You need to be aware of not doing anything that increases your intra-abdominal pressure too much, as this can raise your blood pressure and put additional strain on your growing uterus," says Sean Tangney. "Heavy weightlifting can do this, so be sure to modify your Olympic lifting and kettlebells at this point.

Lower your weights to about 25-35% of your regular weights."

Shoulder press and push press should remain comfortable for most during this trimester. As your belly begins to impede your bar path, it will be easier to switch to the hang position for cleans and snatches, and you can start using dumb bells instead of a barbell.

Dr Divanovic advises that you no longer squat below 90 degrees. This is due to the relaxin hormone – a hormone produced by the ovaries during pregnancy that causes pelvic and cervical expansion and relaxation. Relaxin softens the connective tissue by increasing the water content in fibres, thereby making the ligaments and tendons more elastic. So basically you are bendier and this can add tension and damage your joints if you overstretch them. Hold a stretch to a comfortable level and allow the muscle to release slowly and gently.

It's also a good idea to avoid doing squat cleans or snatches. Instead, clean or snatch the weight and then lower yourself into the squat, making it a two-part movement.

Front squat, back squat and overhead squat with a lighter weight, as long as it is comfortable and you don't drop below 90 degrees.

Start deadlifting with a heavy kettlebell. The weight will then be directly beneath you, which is safer.

### THIRD TRIMESTER (29 TO 40 WEEKS)

In the third trimester, your growing belly will be in your way for a lot of exercises and you'll find your movements will become a lot more cumbersome.

Much of what you will be able to do will depend on how you are feeling. Try to keep doing the exercises that are still comfortable and then use substitute exercises for those that are not.

Your focus in this trimester is just to keep moving at a slow and steady pace with controlled movements.

Decrease your lifting weights as necessary, and continue to avoid squatting beyond 90 degrees. Running and rowing can continue if you are still able, otherwise substitute with brisk walking or by marching on the spot.

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**DEADLIFT:** swap using a barbell with a heavy kettlebell so the weight is safely directed beneath you.



Remember to keep your intensity in check using the talk test – you should be able to maintain a conversation while training without getting out of breath.

As long as your doctor is happy with your progress, you can safely continue to train right up until your baby is born.

### POST PARTUM

You can return to your normal workouts about six weeks after the baby is born. This applies whether you have had a caesarean or a natural birth.

The main thing is to pay attention to your body and take it slowly. It will take time for

your body to adjust to not being pregnant anymore. And, caring for a newborn, you will also be tired.

Give yourself a little time but keep moving. It will help you get your body back, you'll gain some extra energy, and it's a great way to grab some much-needed "you-time". Your mental and emotional health is important too.

Try to maintain or return to your clean eating habits, but be sure to increase your intake. If you are breastfeeding and CrossFitting, you'll need to ensure you are getting enough calories.

No matter what exercise you choose during your pregnancy, maintaining your

fitness has many benefits. It will help increase circulation, improve posture, aid with sleeplessness and help control weight gain while toning your muscles and making it easier to get back into shape after baby is born.

How you choose to stay healthy is up to you, but it's vital that you always listen to your body and do what feels comfortable for you. It's also important to find a trainer or coach you trust who has the expertise to support you.

With the right guidance in a controlled environment, CrossFit can be a safe and enjoyable way to ensure you have a healthy pregnancy and baby. □