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FLEXING MOMMY MUSCLES



BY NICOLE LETTS
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Helping women stay fit during pregnancy, not just after



STORY: Nicole Letts

(<https://simplybuckhead.com/flexing-mommy-muscles/>)

Katie Scharf is the happily married, proud mom of two boys. Beyond these important roles, Scharf also holds a few other titles. She's a certified perinatal fitness trainer, a certified personal trainer and a women's strength specialist. She's also the owner and lead trainer behind Strength in Moms, an in-home personal training company servicing Brookhaven, Sandy Springs and other Atlanta neighborhoods specifically for prenatal and postpartum mothers.



KATIE SCHARF

While a lot of attention is placed on women bouncing back to their pre-baby exercise routines after giving birth, we don't often recognize the safe ways to stay fit during pregnancy. According to Scharf, "Research has shown that staying strong and fit during your pregnancy can help reduce overall pregnancy weight gain, help mom prepare for the physical needs of labor and delivery, reduce body aches and pains, maintain better posture and

balance, and even reduce the need for delivery interventions [such as induction and cesarean deliveries]."

The trainers at Strength in Moms have determined how to provide expectant mothers with the best personalized fitness for their changing bodies. "We focus on total body strength and conditioning with a primary focus on core and pelvic floor strength," says Scharf. "Pregnancy is such a dynamic time in a women's life. She will have to adjust to a constantly changing body, so being strong and fit is important for the mother, the baby and the whole family."

To get started with Strength in Moms, clients must first schedule a visit with their doctor or midwife. “We require a [completed] medical waiver that allows the medical professional to add additional comments that the trainer may need to safely create a workout program.” Scharf also recommends investing in comfortable, bump-friendly workout gear, including a supportive sports bra and athletic shoes. Proper hydration and meals are important, too. “A mother needs to drink water throughout her workouts in order to avoid dehydration as well as properly fuel her body before and after,” says Scharf. Most important, “a mother needs to learn to listen to her body,” says Scharf. “It will speak to her, and she needs to listen and breathe deeply.”

For women who haven’t been all that active prior to pregnancy, Scharf says not to worry. “The previous myth of pregnancy was that a woman wasn’t supposed to start anything new. This doesn’t mean that if she isn’t active, she shouldn’t start to become active during pregnancy. A woman who’s healthy can begin a fitness routine during her pregnancy and maintain her fitness throughout. A sedentary life for an overall healthy mother can be dangerous and lead to other health concerns. Being a mom is hard work, and a strong and fit mom is ready for the challenge.”

STRENGTH IN MOMS
strengthinmoms.com

AN AT-HOME WORKOUT FOR THE MOM-TO-BE

Strength in Moms' Katie Scharf recommends these exercises for pregnant & postpartum women.

1. **Squats** are great for opening a woman's hips and building lower body strength. They can be performed with no weight, holding a weight or even pushed up against a wall.
2. **Overhead Shoulder Presses** provide the shoulder strength a mom will need after she welcomes her little bundle of joy. Use 5- to 15-pound hand weights, or even a gallon of milk or something else you have around the house.
3. **Lunges** work the lower body. You can perform them to the front, the back or to the side. Focus on foot placement and form to protect the hips and knees.
4. A great piece of equipment for a pregnant mom is a **stability ball**. She can incorporate it in her workouts, sit on it when her hips are aching, use it during labor and delivery for ease of lower back pain and also softly bounce on it to calm a crying newborn.