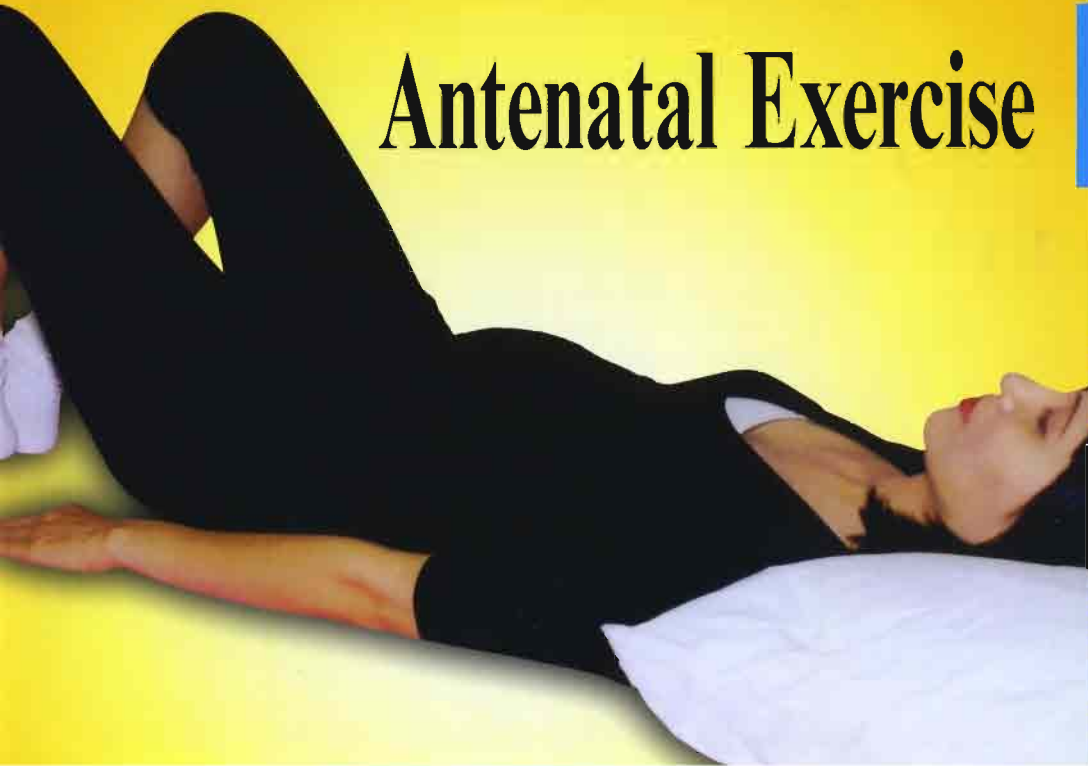




Department of Health

# Antenatal Exercise



## **I Purposes of antenatal exercise**

Antenatal exercise aims at preventing low back pain and enhancing physical and psychological preparation for delivery by means of joint stretching and muscle strengthening.

## **II Guidelines for antenatal exercise**

- Breathe smoothly, work gradually according to your capability.
- Work twice or thrice a day and repeat each set of movements ten times in every session.
- Antenatal exercise may begin when pregnancy reaches 16 to 20 weeks.
- Physiotherapist may make modifications to the exercise according to your physical conditions.

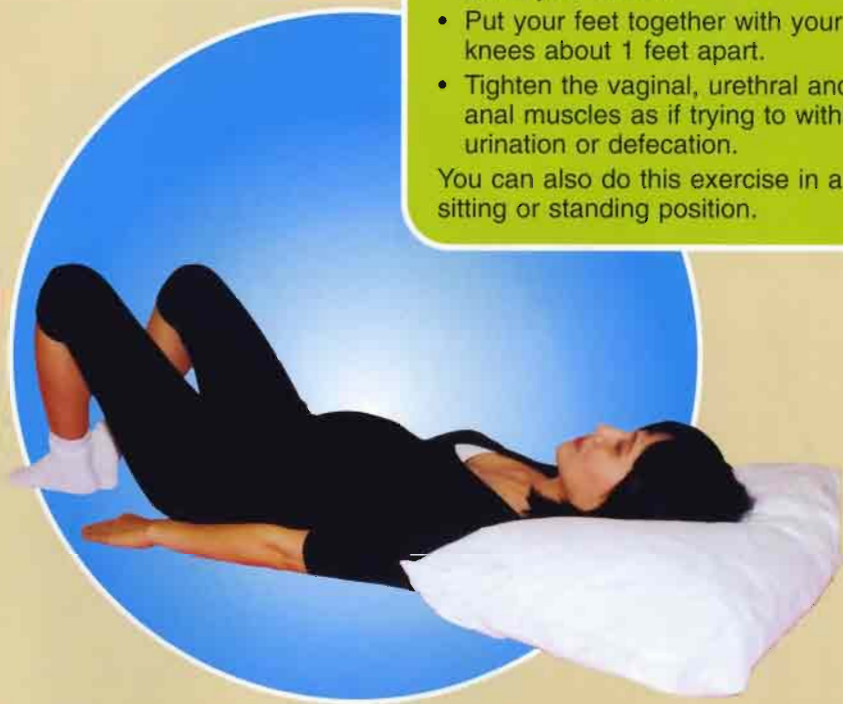
**Note:** This leaflet is only a partial introduction to antenatal exercise. You are advised to join an antenatal exercise class organised by physiotherapy department.

### III Types of antenatal exercise

#### (1) Pelvic floor exercise

- Lie on your back.
- Bend your knees.
- Put your feet together with your knees about 1 feet apart.
- Tighten the vaginal, urethral and anal muscles as if trying to withhold urination or defecation.

You can also do this exercise in a sitting or standing position.



## (2) Back and abdominal exercise

- Lie on your back.
- Bend your knees.
- Keep both feet slightly apart.
- Breathe naturally.

While breathing out, tighten the abdomen and the buttocks; then press the pelvis downwards to flatten your low back against the bed. Hold for 5 seconds, and relax.



### (3) Ankle exercise

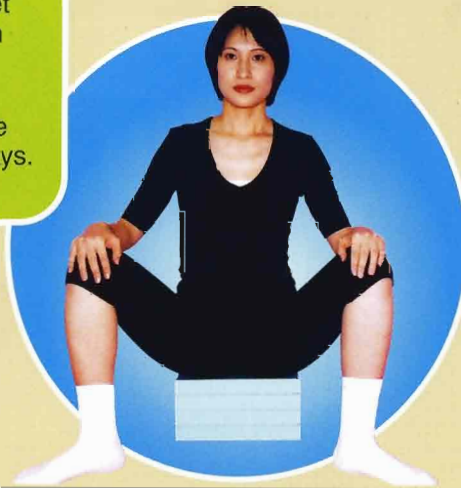
Ankle exercise helps reduce leg swelling and varicose vein, thus alleviating the problem of spasm.

- Lie on your back and rest both legs on the top of a pillow.
- Turn your ankles upwards and downwards. Each up-and-down movement is counted as one time. Repeat ten times.
- Rotate your ankles to draw an inward circle. Each circular movement is counted as one time. Repeat ten times.
- Rotate your ankles to draw an outward circle. Repeat ten times.



### (4) Lower Limbs relaxation exercise

- To enhance flexibility and strength of inner thighs and pelvis muscles, get accustomed to the delivery position and prevent thigh spasm during delivery.
- Sit on a stable low stool against the wall and spread your thighs sideways. Hold for 5 seconds and relax.

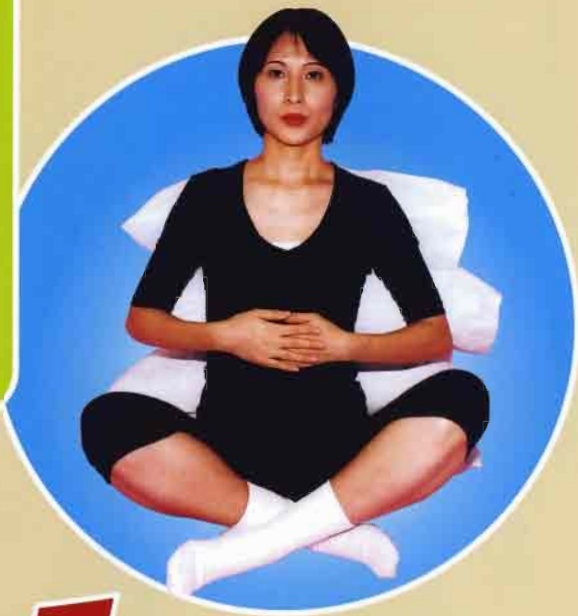


## (5) Breathing exercise

- Breathing techniques for pain relief during labour.

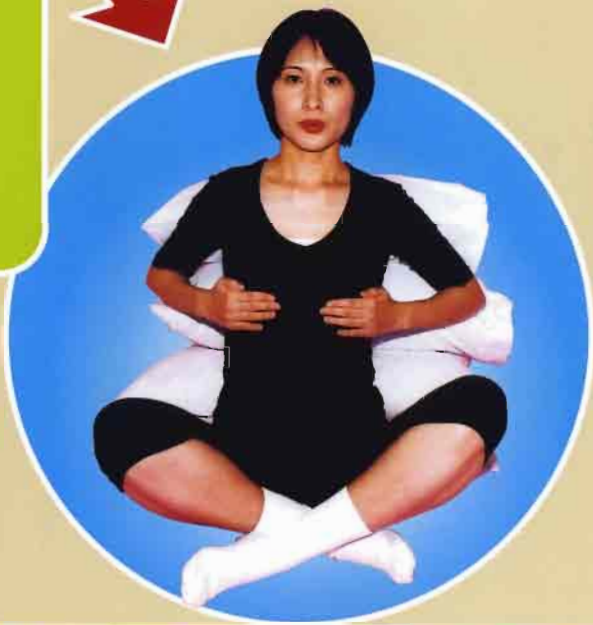
### A. Abdominal breathing

- Suitable for mild pain.
- Breathe in through the nose and feel the abdomen expand. Then breathe out through the mouth.



### B. Lower costal breathing

- Suitable for medium pain.
- Put your hands on the lower rib cage. Breathe in through the nose and feel your chest expand. Then breathe out lightly through the mouth.





### C. Apical breathing

- Suitable for severe pain.
- Cross your hands below the clavicles with your mouth slightly open. Breathe in through the nose and mouth. Breathe out lightly as if trying to flicker the flame of a candle without blowing it out, and feel the upper lungs moving slightly up and down.
  - \* During contractions, try to relax and control your breathing.
  - \* In between contractions, rest and relax as much as you can in the most comfortable position.



### Points to Note in Daily Life

- When you lift an object, bend your knees with the strength of your thigh muscles and keep your low back straight by tightening the abdominal muscle, and then straighten your knee joints to lift the object.
- To get up in bed, lie down sideways with both legs hanging over the edge of the bed, and then push up your body by straightening both arms.
- Tighten your abdomen and keep your back straight when sitting or standing.

For more health information, please call our health information hotlines or visit our websites:  
Hotlines: 24-hour Family Health Service Information Hotline, Department of Health (2112 9900)  
24-hour Health Education Hotline, Department of Health (2833 0111)  
Website: [www.fhs.gov.hk](http://www.fhs.gov.hk)

