

**Wednesday 9.29.21**

**Customizing for the Pregnant & Postpartum Athlete**

*\*These are all suggested movements and strategies. There is no one size fits all approach to fitness in pregnancy/postpartum. Start to build awareness, be able to ask questions of yourself on how a movement, load, intensity, etc helps support your individual considerations and goals as well as your postpartum recovery and long term core/pelvic health. More detailed information can be found via the links in the document if you'd like to learn more about changes in each trimester, breathing strategies, etc.\**

<p><b>Program A Workout</b></p> <p>3 sets with 3 rounds in each set. Each set consists of:</p> <p>8 kipping pullups 10 DB push press 12 alternating goblet lunges *1 minute rest between rounds</p>	<p><b>Shift</b></p> <p>3 x 4 min AMRAPs with 1 minute rest between AMRAPs</p> <p>8 ring rows 10 push press (KB/DB) 12 bodyweight alternating lunges</p>
---	---

**Pregnancy Suggestions:**

See below and attached links for more details and additional ways to customize your workout as you navigate your pregnancy/postpartum journey. These are suggested timelines and customizations- there is a lot of gray and that's ok!

<p><b>Early Pregnancy</b></p> <p>Program A Workout</p> <p>3 sets of 3 rounds in each set with a 1:00-2:00 rest between sets as needed. *rest 5 -10 breaths between movements as needed*</p> <p>4-6 <u>strict pullups</u> or 4-8 kipping pullups 10 <u>push presses</u> (focus on breathing/position) 12 <u>alternating goblet lunges</u></p>	<p><b>Mid to Late Pregnancy</b></p> <p>Shift Version</p> <p>3 x 4 minute AMRAPs for Quality with a 1:00-2:00 minute rest between AMRAPs (add a 4th round or reduce to 2. Make this for you!)</p> <p>8 ring rows or 8/8 <u>single arm supported bent over rows</u> 10 alternating single arm DB strict press 12 <u>reverse lunges</u>- optional weight (hold onto support if needed) or 12 <u>narrow stance</u> BW box squats if experiencing pubis symphysis</p>
--	--

Intensity during pregnancy is recommended to a moderate to moderate high intensity rather than an all out effort. ACOG Guidelines suggest a talk test which means being able to speak a short sentence (ex: I really love these lunges!) as a way to monitor effort. You can learn more [here](#) in this resource guide.

### **Pregnancy Tips/Reminders:**

- Remember to use the talk test to help measure exertion
- 1st Trimester add rest and give yourself grace - fatigue is a very real thing as your body undergoes tremendous changes.
- Think about the risk vs reward of movement. How will this movement benefit you now, your postpartum recovery and your long term core/pelvic floor health?
- Try new breathing strategies. Example: an exhale through the full range of motion and reset with inhale/relax belly, glute, PF between reps. See [resource guide](#) for more.
- Fitness freedom! Adjust range of motion, reps, intensity, duration, breathing strategy as needed- you have to meet yourself where you are!
- Pregnant athletes use a load that you can easily breath through. If you have pain, PF symptoms or it just doesn't feel right, adjust load, volume, intensity, the ROM, etc.
- Switch to dumbbells for rows or high pulls or different pulling variation if pull-ups/ring rows don't feel good or you experience symptoms.
- 2nd/3rd Trimester: If you have pubis symphysis or SI pain pause the lunge movement for now. Check in with breath, position and tension strategies, sometimes adjusting a little can help! Oftentimes adjusting to a more narrow stance like a narrow stance box squat, narrow stance elevated suitcase deadlift or glute bridge with a gentle ball squeeze can feel good. \*See below for more information\*.
- 3rd trimester: Opt for a DB single arm press if going OH with both hands causes symptoms (ex: many feel more pressure in pelvic floor or abdominal wall). Check in with position- have belly & chest pointed forward or slightly down rather than up, ribs stacked over hips with the glutes behind and not tucked under your hips throughout the movement.
- Focus on intention rather than intensity.
- Have fun! Remember this is just for now!
- Look for the opportunity to build forward during this season rather than focusing on what you're not currently training.

## Postpartum Suggestions:

See below and attached links for more details and additional ways to customize your workout as you navigate your pregnancy/postpartum journey. These are suggested timelines and customizations- there is a lot of gray and that's ok!

<b>Early Postpartum (6-16 weeks) *this time frame is not one size fits all*</b>	<b>16 weeks+ postpartum (or after rehab &amp; rebuilding of foundational strength) gradually progress as recover &amp; build strength</b>
<p>3 sets (reduce to 1 or 2 sets if needed)</p> <p>8 <a href="#">banded pressdowns</a> or Functional Progression 1</p> <p>10/10 each side of banded <a href="#">Pallof Presses</a> (or standing chest press with light weight like soup can)</p> <p>5 <a href="#">wall slides</a></p> <p>5 ½ <a href="#">kneeling breaths on each side</a></p> <p>5/5 <a href="#">reverse lunges (supported)</a></p> <p>Rest :90-2:00 between sets focusing on breath</p>	<p>Shift Version</p> <p>3 x 4 minute AMRAPs for Quality with a 1:00-2:00 minute rest between AMRAPs (add a 4th round or reduce to 2. Make this for you!)</p> <p>8 ring rows, or 4-6 <a href="#">assisted strict pullups</a> (8/8 <a href="#">supported bent over rows</a> or <a href="#">high pulls</a> if no rings or PU bar)</p> <p>10 <a href="#">alternating single arm strict press</a> or <a href="#">seated</a></p> <p>12 alternating reverse or forward lunges (optional weight starting low load)</p>

## Postpartum Tips/Reminders:

- You should be cleared by your medical team & I recommend visiting a pelvic health therapist in person or virtually. Once given all clear proceed with a yellow light instead of green.
- Think about intention over intensity & quality over quantity. Low & Slow progressing over time.
- If you have pain or symptoms while doing a movement try to adjust to something different. Try a different breath, position, tension first to see if that can make a difference.
- Early postpartum: try an exhale through the full ROM & reset with inhale/ relax belly/pf between reps as needed. This can be especially helpful during lunges if you find yourself off balance.
- Adjust ROM, reps, intensity, duration, breathing strategy as needed- meet yourself where you are!
- Even though you may feel ready right away to start kipping or push presses, provide an opportunity for your body to heal and regain connection, coordination and strength before moving to more dynamic movements.
- Work on setting a foundation of learning strategies, controlling movement, loading it, & then you'll be ready to add some dynamic movement back in!
- Slow is smooth is fast!

- Have fun! Remember this is just for now & look for the opportunity to build forward utilizing fitness freedom in workouts to customize them for your individual considerations.

### **Questions to start asking, considering or building awareness on during your pregnancy or postpartum.**

- Are you experiencing pain, leaking, heaviness in the vagina, or doming/coning along the midline of the core?
- Are you able to breathe through movements or are you holding your breath?
- Are you gripping your abdomen or clenching your glutes? Evaluate tension you are carrying in daily activities in and out of the gym.
- Risk vs Reward: Just because you can do something should you?
- Become aware of your tendencies in positions (ex: standing more to one side, glutes tucked under the pelvis, rib cage pointing upwards, etc.)

### **Quick Notes on Coning & Pubis Symphysis**

\*Coning is an indication of pressure in our core. As pregnancy progresses, the linea alba thins and widens to adjust for a growing baby. This is completely normal! Try not to be scared of coning but utilize it as feedback to adjust how you're managing pressure within that movement to see if you can change it. We have the opportunity to control what we can during pregnancy and can use this as information to help us know when to start potentially adjusting movements.\*

SI or pubis symphysis pain may also start to occur in 2nd/3rd trimester. Try not to push into the movement if you experience this. For SI pain or pubis symphysis pain oftentimes adopting a more narrow stance and sticking with bilateral movements rather than unilateral can help as well as trying different breathing, tension and position strategies. Stretching can help along incorporating movements that continue to strengthen hips, glutes and core. Please also reach out for support and work with a pelvic floor therapist, Webster certified chiropractor or qualified prenatal coach.

[Video for glute bridge with ball/yoga block](#)

For more information, details, and strategies click the attached [Pregnancy & Postpartum](#) workbook link [here](#).

## **Pull Ups and the Pregnant/Postpartum Athlete**

Can I or should I continue to perform pullups during pregnancy?  
What if I experience coning, pulling, leaking, heaviness or pressure?  
What is a good substitute?  
When can I start doing pullups again postpartum?

Pullups come with a lot of questions during pregnancy/postpartum and for good reason! We see a lot on social media these days referencing coning/diastasis. There are people who say don't do pull ups and those that kip into labor. The answer isn't black or white but lies in the middle. Each person will weigh the risk vs reward of the movement and how it relates to them, their individual circumstances and long term goals.

I typically recommend that athletes start pausing kipping sometime in the 2nd trimester. Kipping is a dynamic movement in which we tend to experience pressure into the abdominal wall or sometimes into the pelvic floor. Pressure isn't bad, however during pregnancy we have an opportunity to control how and why we move. With that, we can choose to limit or adjust movements as a way to mitigate (not necessarily prevent) our core/pelvic floor health. What we can't control is our birth experience but that is another topic.

### Timeline & Pullup Variations

#### Pregnancy

#### [Video with overall thoughts & movement demos](#)

1st trimester- typically ok, however if you do have abdominal pain, pulling, coning or any heaviness or pressure in your pelvic floor pause the movement to try a different breath, position, tension or movement altogether.

2nd and 3rd trimester- most athletes don't feel comfortable kipping and some may not feel comfortable performing strict pullups. There is so much opportunity to build skill and strength balance as well as learn strategies to support you now and postpartum. Pausing kipping pullups does not mean you will lose them, they will be back. As one of my mentors, Antony Lo says, it's not forever, just for now.

#### *Pullup Variations for Pregnancy*

- Strict (band assisted or toe assisted- try both as one may feel better than another!)
- Ring rows
- [Landmine rows \(single or double arm\)](#)
- [Banded lat pulldowns](#)
- [Banded pressdowns](#)
- [Single arm bent over rows](#) (supported off wall or box I love for late pregnancy/early postpartum)
- [Seated band rows](#)

- [Single arm highpulls](#) (use a light DB, soup can, bottle of laundry detergent, etc)
- Additional movements: bird dog, pallof press, kettlebell march, incline plank

### *Progressing Pullups Postpartum*

Learn how to connect breath, core, pelvic floor first, and rebuild a foundation of core, hip, glute strength as well as shoulder mobility and pulling strength. I have yet to work with an athlete that has regretted taking their time progressively building back to pullups! In fact, many athletes may find that their gymnastics movements are stronger than pre pregnancy due to the foundation built & strategies utilized postpartum!

When you first get on the pullup bar you may notice abdominal coning. Use this as feedback that there is opportunity to manage pressure differently and keep building core strength in this position.

Tip: Try inhaling wide into your lats, belly and back relaxing belly and pelvic floor. On exhale, exhale like you're blowing through a cocktail straw, while gently lifting your pelvic floor up and in. Another option for exhale is to think about expanding or spreading your ribcage as you exhale. Oftentimes this helps redistribute pressure and coning!

### *Postpartum Suggested Progression of Movements:*

- Functional progression 1 and 3.
- [Banded Pressdowns](#)/Band Pullaparts/Banded rows/Single arm bent over rows/Bent over rows
- [Single arm high pulls](#)
- Inverted Rows/Ring Rows (start in a more vertical position with feet under rings gradually over time working towards lowering your to parallel with feet in front of the rings)
- [Bent knee hollow holds](#) (progressing to full hollow hold)
- Arches/Supermans
- [Bar Hang](#) (use your feet as needed to help reduce some tension) Start at a few seconds then gradually increase time. (If no bar, try a single arm overhead hold and then a double overhead hold)
- Negative Pullups (supported with a band or box as needed)
- Supported Pullups (toe assist or band)
- Strict Pullups
- Kip Swings
- Kipping pullups

When performing holds start with a few seconds and then rest. Gradually build time and reduce rest as tolerated. Same concept for reps. Start low sets and reps then gradually increase over each week as needed. If you experience any symptoms or don't feel quite ready to add more or move to the next progression stay there for a bit longer!

Breathing Tip: pay attention to how and when you breathe. Try an exhale on exertion and playing around with the amount of tension you're using.

Does the return to pullups have to include all of these movements? No. However there should be a progressive return where strength and coordination is built first, then adding volume, then the dynamic movement. Some people may be able to return to pullups within a few months postpartum while it may take others 6,9, 12 months. That's ok!

Take a peek at the Street Parking pullup program as a way to rebuild pullups when you're ready. It allows for progressive overload and consistently has you working towards your goals!

Video Links for Gymnastic/Pullup Variations

[21.3 and 21.4 Open WOD Video: Variations for Toes to Bar, Pullups, Chest to Bar, and Ring MU](#)