

### HAVE A BALL

A physiotherapist and mother, Alison Blake teaches a unique prenatal program called Bodyball – perfect if you want to bounce through your pregnancy. As the name suggests, a Swiss ball is the central piece of equipment required. “This means that individualised programs addressing the musculoskeletal needs can be modified so that they’re specific to each client,” Alison explains.

Bodyball focuses on pelvic and spinal stability. “It is instructed by a specialist who can make adjustments to an exercise at the time of the class,” says Alison. She adds that pelvic floor and abdominal exercises should be performed daily.

“The visualisation requires women to tighten the deep abdominal muscle corset as if to hug the baby. By doing this and drawing up on the pelvic floor the ‘package’ of the baby is truly supported – snug as a bug,” she says. Visit [www.bodyball.com.au](http://www.bodyball.com.au) for more information.

### PREGGY PILATES

Melissa Bull suffered from pelvic joint pain throughout her three pregnancies and knows firsthand that managing such symptoms during pregnancy and in postnatal recovery is imperative. Now the physiotherapist owns and runs Bumps Pilates in Melbourne.

# Fitness with a difference

There’s plenty of evidence to indicate that exercise during pregnancy will keep you and your baby healthier. Four experts suggest alternative types of exercise that you may never have considered

Melissa says that women who have never done Pilates before can start during pregnancy, but it’s vital that they work at their own pace and are supervised. “There are some positions that may need to be avoided at certain stages of the pregnancy due to the stretching of the tummy muscles and the pressure of the growing baby on the mother,” she says.

“The technique also needs to be performed correctly, otherwise there can be a bearing down effect on the pelvic floor, which can weaken the muscles rather than strengthen them.” Mums-to-be will experience

physical benefits and decreased stress levels if they attend two classes per week. “Even one class per week mixed with some walking or swimming will be highly beneficial,” says Melissa.

Visit [www.bumpspilates.com.au](http://www.bumpspilates.com.au) for more information.

### MOTHER OF ZEN

A yoga teacher and mum of four, Zoe Mongey has been practising yoga for years, and she found regular yoga had profound effects on her pregnancy, labour and newborn babies.

“Prenatal yoga focuses on opening the hips and groin, which will prepare the body for labour. Yoga will strengthen the



Yoga teacher Zoe Mongey thanks yoga for the speedy arrival of her children

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### WATER BABIES

A midwife and child and family health nurse, Donna Lohmeyer realised the benefits of an active pregnancy during her midwifery degree. “After graduating I trained as an aquanatal instructor and then worked for four years as an aquanatal midwife in London,” she says.

Donna practised aquanatal (water aerobics tailored to pregnancy and postnatal recovery) through her first two pregnancies in the UK. When the family



decided to move back to Australia, she was pregnant with her third child but couldn’t find any classes. Eventually, she went on to start Sydney Aquanatal.

“Exercising in water is low impact, which places less stress on joints,” she says. “And the hydrostatic pressure of the water has positive effects on fluid balance and swelling and prevents lower back pain much more effectively than land-based exercise.”

Donna says her aquanatal classes are more than just a chance to keep fit – they include health promotion, education and support networks for expectant mothers.

As with all pregnancy exercise, it’s advisable to check the suitability of aquanatal with your doctor first, but Donna insists that midwife-led aquanatal is one of the safest forms of exercise to participate in during pregnancy.

Donna says many women feel their babies moving with them during the class. “I encourage the women to place their hands on their bumps and think about their babies inside – doing their own aquanatal class!”

Head to [www.aquanatal.com.au](http://www.aquanatal.com.au) for class locations and times. ■

pelvic floor, which helps facilitate a safer, less complicated labour,” says Zoe.

Yoga allows mums-to-be the opportunity to take a moment of respite from the chaos of life and focus on the baby growing inside. She says her own experiences prove that there are benefits. “It took six hours for my first to be born, an hour and a half for my third, and 45 minutes for my fourth! I don’t believe it was luck, it is much more likely that I have yoga to thank.”

Zoe has created *Bliss From Within*, a prenatal yoga DVD endorsed by The National Association of Childbirth

Educators. “Many women will find it easier to practise at home rather than getting to classes,” she says.

It’s natural to assume yoga will be near impossible when there’s a bump in the way, but Zoe insists it’s manageable as long as you listen to your body. “I have taught many women who didn’t start until 30 weeks,” she explains. “One woman was 36 weeks when she started, but she swears it helped her beyond words with sleep, comfort and her labour.”

*Bliss from Within* is available from Zoe’s website at [www.jiivana.com.au](http://www.jiivana.com.au).



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