

# Fitness Management<sup>®</sup>

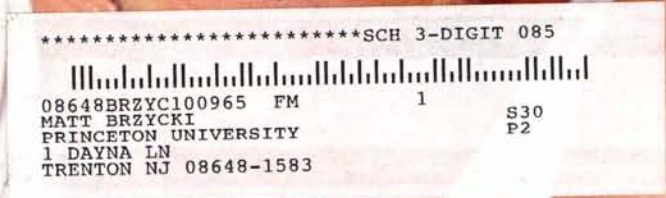
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NOVEMBER 2005

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# Q&A

[BY MATT BRZYCKI]

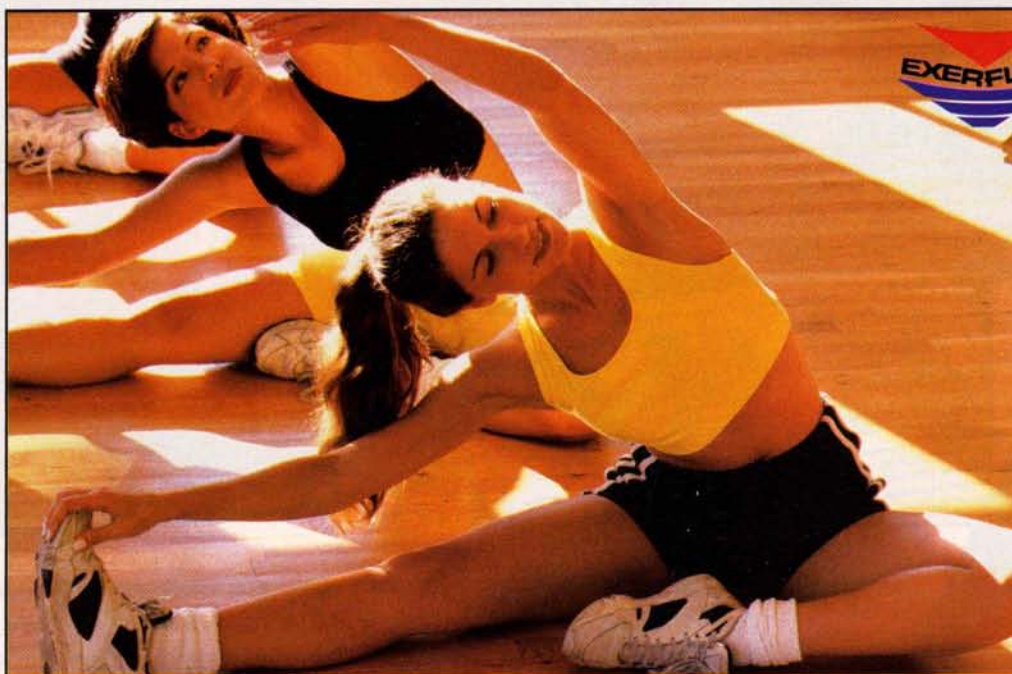
## Is it okay for women to exercise during pregnancy?

It is fine for women to exercise during pregnancy, provided that they've already been exercising. Women who have never participated in an exercise program shouldn't begin one during pregnancy. Also, women should consult their physicians before they initiate any exercise program.

With several precautionary measures, a pregnant woman can perform the same type of exercise program that's recommended for the general population. Program variables — such as intensity, frequency, volume and duration — should be modified based on symptoms and discomfort. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a pregnant woman should stop exercising and seek medical advice if she experiences any of these conditions: vaginal bleeding, dyspnea prior to exertion, dizziness, headache, chest pain, muscle weakness, calf pain or swelling, pre-term labor, decreased fetal movement or amniotic fluid leakage.



High-impact, weight-bearing activities — such as running, jumping, hopping and bouncing — should be eliminated, minimized or replaced with low-impact, non-weight-bearing ones. When strength training, pregnant women should use slightly higher repetition ranges than suggested for the general population. This requires the use of lighter resistance, which reduces the orthopedic stress placed on the vulnerable joint structures.



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ACOG recommends that pregnant women shouldn't exercise in the supine (face-up) position after the first trimester. In the third trimester, women should avoid overexertion, as well as activities that have a high potential for contact or falling. **FM**

## Does strength training really help a person to lose weight?

Strength training will help a person to lose weight, but it may be just a bit overrated. Strength training will increase muscle mass, and muscle tissue is more metabolically active than adipose tissue. So, if a person increases muscle mass — or improves body composition — they will be more efficient at expending calories. But how much more?

Consider two individuals: Tom weighs 200 pounds and has 20 percent body fat, meaning that he has 160 pounds of lean body (fat-free) mass. Ryan also weighs 200 pounds, but has 15 percent body fat, meaning that he has 170 pounds of lean body mass. Because Ryan has more lean body mass, he has a higher basal (resting) metabolic rate than John. With 10 more pounds of lean body mass, it's estimated that Ryan would use about 100 more calories per day than John (assuming, of course, that everything else is equal). This doesn't sound like much, but over the course of a year, it would add up to about 36,500 calories, or nearly 10.5 pounds of fat.

Don't forget that in order to lose weight, caloric expenditure must be greater than caloric consumption. So, performing any type of physical activity can help a person to lose weight since it expends calories (assuming, of course, that caloric consumption stays the same). **FM**

## What's the best grip width to use when performing a bench press?

In a study that involved 24 subjects, researchers compared performance in the bench press using a barbell with six different grip widths: two "narrow," two "moderate" and two "wide." The subjects had at least two years of experience in the bench press, and could lift at least 125 percent of their bodyweight in that exercise.

The study showed that the subjects lifted significantly more



weight with moderate grip widths. In this study, moderate grips were about 26 to 32 inches. However, you don't have to calculate the ideal grip width for all of your members. Simply have them use a grip that's slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. **FM**

Do you have questions that you need answered? Email them to [edit@fitnessgmt.com](mailto:edit@fitnessgmt.com).

*Matt Brzycki is coordinator of recreational fitness and wellness programs at Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. He has more than 22 years of experience at the collegiate level and has authored, co-authored or edited 13 books.*

# What you need to know.

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