

The biggest misconception is that a pregnant woman should not exercise or lift weights during her pregnancy.



How did you feel when you found out you were pregnant?

The moment I discovered I was pregnant, I felt a mixture of feelings. I wondered how my life and my body were going to change and I also realized that I was blessed to be pregnant as many women are not able to get pregnant. I was also excited about discovering a whole new chapter of fitness and learning how to keep healthy during pregnancy. I am past my 5th month and have only gained a couple of kilos due to a healthy lifestyle.

How have you managed stay in shape?

To be honest, I have not really experienced any terrible cravings or mood swings. I believe it is all thanks to a healthy lifestyle and exercising almost daily. Exercise releases the anti-stress hormone called endorphins, which make you feel very happy and relaxed. I believe this helps to keep my mood balanced! I also carry healthy snacks around with me to eat every time I feel hungry. I eat every few hours and this helps to prevent major cravings. However, I do let myself have a cheat meal once or twice a week and this keeps me satisfied.

Should women work out during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, you can more or less do the same exercise that you did before but at a lower intensity. You should not start doing a new high intensity sport that you have never done before and should always listen to your body. I maintain my weight by doing a combination of weightlifting and cardio five times a week. I am lifting lighter weights than before and do a low intensity cardio session once I finish. I also present pregnancy workouts on MTV Lebanon twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday for women to do with me at home.

What's your advice for pregnant women?

My advice for pregnant women to stay fit and healthy is to keep active and pay attention to what they eat! Your diet really is everything. You will only ever get fat during pregnancy if you overeat and make unhealthy food choices. A pregnant woman does not need more than 300 to 500 extra calories a day. Pregnant women must also stay away from fried food, sugar, sweets and any food that is high in fat. Keeping active during pregnancy is essential because it maintains your weight, prevents health problems during pregnancy and also improves the health of your baby. A pregnant woman should always check with her doctor before doing any exercise.

Are you ready for motherhood?

To be honest, I am just taking things as they come. I am reading and researching as much as I can about pregnancy and believe I will know what to do instinctively when the time comes and I become a mother. I also learnt a lot from my mother and believe that I will raise my children the same way that she raised me.

How will motherhood affect your career?

I plan to continue working and being a mother at the same time. My ideal role model is any woman who works and takes care of her family. I believe it is healthy and essential for a woman to work and continue to have her own career. It all boils down to keeping a healthy balance between focusing on her family and focusing on her career.

What do you want to teach your children?

The most important lesson I want to teach my children is to be humble and to respect all others and to treat them with kindness. There are many different religions, cultures and ways of life other than our own and what makes the world a beautiful place is to celebrate these differences. I was born to a Dutch mother and Lebanese father, I was born in the United States and have lived in several different countries so I know the value of enjoying different cultures.

Tell us about your mission...

A few years ago, I started a website and a mobile application called "Start Living Right" to help change peoples' lives and educate them on how to live a healthy lifestyle for free. It then became my goal to open a physical location named after my platform where I can help people in person. A couple of months ago, I finally

opened my own gym and brought my dream to life. My gym offers everything a person needs. We have coaches, a sports nutritionist, physiotherapy, classes and we are building a bar to serve healthy food, drinks and snacks.

Do you have plans for expansion?

Yes! I certainly plan to expand across the region. I hope one day to open in Egypt. I am someone that pursues my goals and I never stop until I reach them.

What are the biggest mistakes pregnant women make?

The biggest misconception that I want to correct is that a pregnant woman should not exercise or lift weights during her pregnancy. I know of many women who have completely stopped their exercise programs once they got pregnant because they believe it is bad for their health. The opposite is true! These women usually gain too much weight during their pregnancy and might even develop healthy problems such as diabetes. You should continue to exercise at a lighter intensity and not use pregnancy as an excuse to become lazy. This also makes it easier to get back into shape after delivery.

A word to our readers...

My advice to your readers during Ramadan is to continue to make healthy food choices. Since they will be eating once a day, it is important to fill your plate with nutritious food that will make you feel good and have energy during the fasting period. It is also a good idea to do some exercise at night after breaking the fast. I never recommend exercising when you are unable to drink water and stay hydrated, especially in hot weather. This is actually very dangerous!

