

## Stretching & Relaxin

### What is Relaxin and its effects?

Relaxin is a hormone that is produced from around the second week of pregnancy and is present until breastfeeding stops. This hormone allows for the relaxation of the ligaments in the pelvis which in turn allows for separation of joint surfaces. This is helpful in allowing the body to slowly adapt and expand to cater for the size of the foetus as it grows, as well as enabling the birth process. While relaxin is present it is not only confined to the pelvis joints - but other joints will also become more relaxed and less stable. This is compounded with the extra weight the body isn't used to carrying which can put a lot of pressure on the joints.

You may find you are more flexible, with a larger range of movement than before, therefore care needs to be taken when stretching. As a general guide, during pregnancy and in the postpartum period, stretching should be limited to maintenance, and you shouldn't try to increase flexibility in this stage of your life.

### Cool down in the Mamawell programme

Each video session contains a short stretch to cool down, however this is the minimum you should do after working out. Take extra time to stretch thoroughly as this will limit muscular pain after exercising.

Breathe deeply into each stretch and stay for at least 20 seconds. Remember to not go too deep into your stretches, just where your body comes to a stop with a little bit of 'give' in the muscles. If in doubt, try and stretch the lower body: calves, quads, hamstrings, glutes. Then triceps, shoulders, chest and back.