

## Post-Natal Advice and Exercises: Following your Caesarean Section birth

This leaflet provides a sensible exercise plan from the first day following caesarean delivery.

### **Exercise post caesarean section**

After giving birth, your baby becomes your main priority, but it is important to make time for yourself!

These exercises can help following your operation to help breathing and circulation in order to reduce and post-operation complications.

It is important that you allow time for your body to recover and only do what is comfortable.

### **Protecting your wound**

In order to protect your wound you must avoid directly performing a sit up to get out of bed. Instead try rolling on your side and pushing yourself up. When you cough, support the wound with your hands and hold a pillow/towel over the wound to help reduce further strain.

### **Breathing and circulation**

It is important that you do regular deep breathing exercises. Take a long deep breath in to expand the base of your lungs. Pause, then relax and let the breath go. Taking 3-4 deep breaths every hour can help keep the chest clear from infections.

Until you gain your mobility, it is important you maintain your circulation whilst in bed. Move your feet up and down briskly from ankles every hour.

You must perform these exercises regularly until you regain your mobility.

These exercises can help reduce wind pains. Only do the exercises within your comfort zone.

### **Pelvic Rocking**

In high sitting, slowly flatten the curve of your back by pushing your back down into the bed. Try placing your hand in the small of your back and pushing your back onto your hand. Hold the 5 seconds. Relax, and then repeat 5-10 times



© Healthwise, Incorporated



### **Knee Rolling**

In high sitting, bend your knees. Keeping your knees and feet together, slowly roll your knees from side to side within your comfort zone. Repeat 5 times

### **Pelvic floor exercises**

It doesn't matter how you delivery your baby, your pelvic floor muscles will have been weakened. The pelvic floor muscles surround the front and back passage. They help to control the bladder and bowel, stopping any incontinence.

### How to strengthen the pelvic floor?

1. Sit or lie comfortable and relax the stomach and buttock.
2. Squeeze and lift the muscles around your front passage, vagina and back passage.
3. Imagine stopping the flow of urine or controlling wind.
4. Try performing some short strong squeezes.
5. Additionally, try holding the muscles for up to 10 seconds.

Aim to perform 5-10 squeezes depending on how strong your pelvic floor is.  
Relax for 5 seconds in-between.

You will need to perform the whole routine 4-6 times daily.

To make the exercises harder increased the length of the hold and start to do the exercises in an upright position.

### How NOT to exercise the pelvic floor

DO NOT stop your urine flow mid-stream as part of an exercise

DO NOT hold your breath/ bear down and strain

DO NOT clench your buttocks

Performing the exercises correctly you will feel the muscles drawing in and upwards. You will also feel the muscles that surround the vagina and anus tighten.

### Back Care

It is important you look after your back following delivery to prevent any strains or trauma.

To prevent this, try to follow these tips:

- Do not lift anything heavier than your baby for 6 weeks
- Always bend your knees and squat down keeping your back straight when lifting
- Your changing table height should be with your waist
- Kneel when playing with your baby instead of leaning forwards
- Keep the object that you are lifting close to your body

### Supportive feeding positions

It is important to have the correct feeding position, whether you are breast feeding or bottle feeding. This will help any upper back and neck stiffness.

Follow the **RESTS** technique:

**R** – relax your back against a chair once your baby is latched on

**E** – exercise your pelvic floor to encourage blood flow

**S** – support the weight of your baby with a pillow so that you're not using your arms to hold your baby

**T** – telephone book sized object should be placed under your feet to lift your hips and take the pressure away from your spine  
**S** – stretch your upper chest after each feed to prevent chest tightness

### Exercise

Gradually build up your activity following birth. It is best to start with low impact activities such as walking and swimming. You must wait until 6 weeks after your post-natal check before you go swimming.

Avoid high impact exercise for 6-12 months post-delivery. Performing high impact exercise too early following delivery can damage your already weakened pelvic floor muscles.

Take care to avoid the following movements until your abdominal muscles are engaged:

- Any rotational or side bending movement
- Sit ups or 'crunch' exercises
- Double straight leg lifts

Make sure that you can raise your head without your tummy muscles rising before you start exercising your abdominal muscles.

### **Further help post delivery**

If you have any concerns regarding exercise or pelvic floor muscles, contact the department for further advice. We also treat and advise

- Bladder/bowel problems
- Coccyx pain
- Bulging tummy after 8 weeks
- Persistent painful perineal stitches

If you have a queries contact your physiotherapist who will be happy to advice.

We treat:

- Lower back/groin/hip pain
- Separation of the tummy muscles
- Incontinence

Contact:

Nicky Smith : [nicola.marsh@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk](mailto:nicola.marsh@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk)

Caroline Larkin : [caroline.larkin@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk](mailto:caroline.larkin@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 01922721172 ext 7603