

POST-NATAL ADVICE & EXERCISES

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

Exercise post delivery

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

These exercises can help to gently stretch the lower back, and help gradually reduce the postural changes from carrying your baby.

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

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.

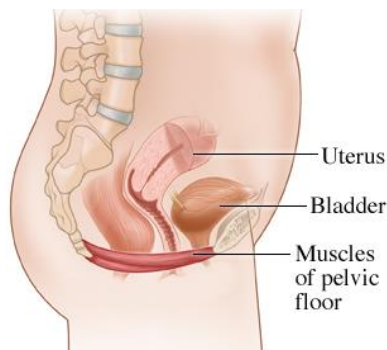


Knee Rolling

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

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

What are the signs of a weak pelvic floor?

- Leaking of urine, wind or faeces
- Heaviness or dragging sensation around the vagina

How long should I do the pelvic floor exercises for?

It takes a minimum of 3 months for the pelvic floor muscles to recover and strengthen.

What if I experience incontinence when I sneeze or cough?

If you experience mild incontinence when you sneeze or cough, your pelvic floor muscles have not yet gained the ability to quickly and strongly contract. You need to practise squeezing the pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can for only a few seconds.

You should also start to squeeze and lift the muscles before you cough, sneeze, laugh and lift heavy objects.

How do I know if I doing the exercise right?

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. The area underneath your belly button may also draw inwards towards your spine.

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 size object should be placed under your feet to lift your hips and take the pressure away from your spine

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 sit ups or 'crunch' exercises for the first 2 months following delivery. Make sure that you can raise your head without your tummy muscles raising before you start exercising your abdominal muscles.



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.

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
- Lower back/groin/hip pain

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

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