

**Important points to remember:**

Your ligaments are still lax for 5-6 months post delivery and slightly longer if breast-feeding. It is important to look after your body during this time to prevent aches and strains and optimise your postnatal recovery.

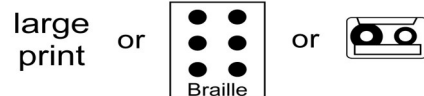
Maintain good posture in sitting and standing especially when feeding, washing and changing your baby as these activities encourage stopped postures. Avoid prolonged stooping positions by always making sure surfaces are the right height for you. It may be preferable to sit or kneel for activities like changing or bathing your baby. When feeding place several pillows under your baby to stop you stooping and to support the cradling arm.

Never perform full sit-ups or double leg lifts. They will strain your back/ tummy muscles and your pelvic floor.


When returning to general exercise postnatally, 6 weeks is advised for a vaginal delivery and 12 weeks for a caesarean delivery.

If you have to lift lessen the strain by reducing the weight. Whenever you are lifting, tighten your pelvic floor and deep abdominal muscles.

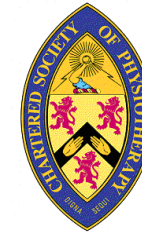
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## Physiotherapy Department

### Exercises and advice after the birth of your baby

Contact Number: 01276 604024 or 01276 604086

Please contact the physiotherapy department for advice or if any exercises you have been given make your symptoms worse. If the physiotherapist is unavailable they will return your call.

## Exercises and Advice for after the Birth of your Baby

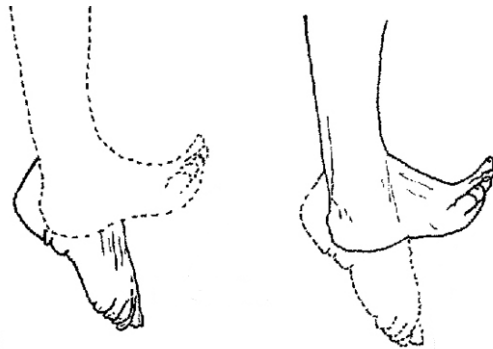
This leaflet offers guidance on specific exercises that will help you get back into shape after the birth of your baby. It is important that you do these exercises in order to fully recover your body from the effects of pregnancy and childbirth. The sooner you start them the better, but start gently and progress slowly.

These exercises are ideal whether you have given birth vaginally or by caesarean section.

### Circulation Exercises

These are to help you get rid of the extra 40-50% of fluid the body takes on during pregnancy.

Briskly circle and bend and stretch each ankle for 20 – 30 seconds as often as possible throughout the day.



It is important to use the deep abdominal and pelvic floor muscles in everyday activities. Tighten them whilst carrying your baby, lifting baby equipment and doing housework. This will reduce the strain on your back and pelvic floor.

### 2. The Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back with your knees bent

Squeeze your pelvic floor and buttocks, tilt your pelvis and flatten your back to the floor or bed. Hold for up to 10 seconds then release. Repeat 10 times, twice a day.



### 3. The Head Lift

Perform a pelvic tilt (as above).

Now squeeze your pelvic floor muscles and lift your head (only your head) and hold up to a maximum of 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times, twice a day.



Now you have worked out your '**starting block**' you must make sure you do it **three** times a day minimum for approximately six months. Building up to 10, 10 second holds of the slow holding contractions and 10 repetitions of the 'quick/non-holding' contractions.

When you reach the six month mark you need to maintain your pelvic floor muscle strength by exercising it at least once a day for life.

The exercises can be done in any position, but it is easier to feel in sitting/lying. As you progress exercise the pelvic floor muscle in standing.

### **Abdominal Exercises**

Do not do high level exercises such as sit ups or lifting both legs up when lying on your back, they may give you back pain or stretch your already weakened pelvic floor. The following exercises will help you recover your abdominal muscles.

#### **1. Deep Abdominal Exercise**

This can be done in lying on your side, sitting or standing:

- Breathe in gently. As you breathe out draw in the lower part of your stomach and squeeze your pelvic floor.
- Hold for several seconds (building up to a maximum of 10 seconds). Relax. Repeat up to 10 times, twice a day.

After **6** weeks you can progress to this position.



### **How to Get In and Out of Bed**

Avoid sitting straight up forwards from lying as this risks straining your back and abdominal muscles. Instead: Bend your knees and roll onto your side. Bring your uppermost shoulder well forward.

Bring your feet over the edge of the bed and let your legs drop down as you push up sideways into sitting, using your elbow and hand.

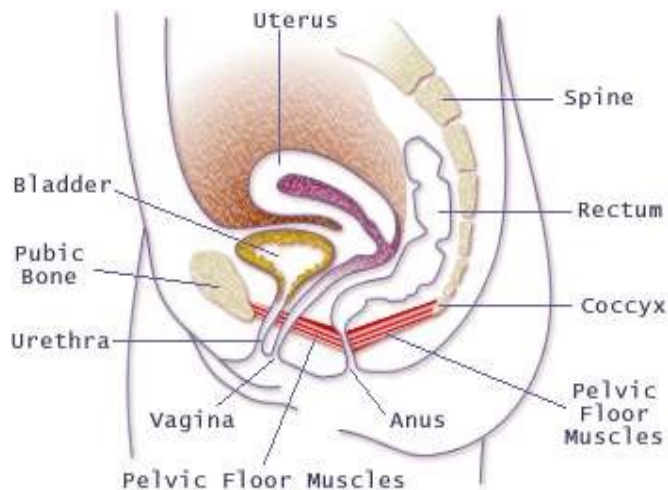
Sit for a few moments before standing up. When you are ready to stand, bring your bottom to the edge of the bed, lean well forwards and push from the bed with your hands. Stand up gradually until you are fully upright. When you return to bed reverse this process.

## Pelvic Floor Exercises

Your pelvic floor is a sling of muscles between your pubic and tail bone. The muscle is perforated by three holes. The rectum, vagina and urethra.

Looking after your pelvic floor is essential following childbirth and throughout your life in order to:-

- keep the bladder and bowel outlets closed to prevent leakage of urine, faeces or wind.
- allow voiding of urine or faeces.
- support the pelvic organs to prevent a prolapse.
- maintain sexual satisfaction.
- support the back and pelvic joints for everyday movement and optimal function.



**Diagram of the female pelvis showing the organs and pelvic floor muscles**

## How to exercise your Pelvic Floor

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time trying to stop your flow or urine. The feeling is one of 'squeeze and lift', closing and drawing up the back and front passages.

Don't pull in your tummy, squeeze your legs together, tighten your buttocks or hold your breath.

### Now establish what you can do...

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as described and hold for as many seconds as you can for a maximum of 10 seconds.

How long can you hold the contraction? \_\_\_\_\_

Rest for 5 seconds and repeat as many times as you can up to a maximum of 10 repetitions.

How many times can you repeat this? \_\_\_\_\_

Now perform the basic pelvic exercise; **'squeeze and lift'** firmly and then let go. Repeat this as many times as you can, up to a maximum of 10 repetitions.

How many quick contractions can you do? \_\_\_\_\_

This is your 'starting block' or 'exercise baseline.'