

POSTNATAL EXERCISES

Postnatal exercise routine on the floor

Start ...

On hands and knees

1. Cat curls—gently stretch your back upwards, with your head down, then reverse: head stretched up and back concave. [X5—10 times]
2. Opposites—stretch one arm and the opposite leg. [X5—10 each side]

Lying on one side

- 3 Lift leg and gently bring it back. [X5-10]
- 4 Bring upper leg forward, knee to the floor, at the same time as you stretch your upper shoulder backwards. You should feel the stretch in your lower back. [Once]

Lying on the other side

- 5 Repeat exercise (3).
- 6 Repeat exercise (4)

Lying on your back

- 7 Bent knee modified 'sit-ups', pointing fingers straight towards knees, and lifting shoulders off the floor. [X5-10]
- 8 Repeat exercise (7), pointing fingers alternately to one knee, then the other. [X5-10]
- 9 With your knees still bent, put your hands flat on your abdomen, and tighten the deep layer of muscle that is like a corset. Visualise your body trim, taut, and terrific!

In any position

Remember to keep your pelvic floor muscles toned and in good working order (see Pelvic Floor INFOSHEET)

Remember:

- to be gentle on your body as you begin your exercise program. Do not make sudden movements, and be guided intuitively, and rest, if you feel an exercise is too stressful.
- Please contact your midwife, GP, or obstetrician if you are experiencing pain that is severe or not able to be managed with basic analgesics (such as Paracetamol).
- Please consult a specialist women's health physiotherapist if you are concerned about your physical recovery after childbirth.

'Tummy time' for your baby

New babies need to exercise their little muscles too!

When baby is awake and happy, place her/him on a rug on the floor, or other firm surface, resting on bent arms. Stroke gently obliquely down the baby's back, without putting pressure on the spine. Baby will lift her head. This act of lifting the head against gravity is important as the head grows quickly in early months, and baby needs to develop good head control.

As baby gets older, she will be happy to spend more time on her tummy; will learn to roll onto her back, and explore more of the surrounding space. Baby will love tummy time more if mummy is with her, talking and interacting, and even doing postnatal exercises.

If baby falls asleep in *tummy time*, pick her up and place baby on her back in her usual sleeping place.

This little postnatal exercise routine is intended for women who are well and actively attending to their own needs, and the needs of their babies, to use daily from about the third postnatal day after a vaginal birth. (a couple of days later if you had a surgical birth)

Continue the exercise routine through the first six weeks after the birth of your baby(ies). When you feel ready to go for a walk, choose an easy walk that you can do with a friend, taking baby along in a sling. Don't push your limits in early days.

Resting helps recovery in the early postnatal days and weeks, particularly resting on your bed. You may catch up on a little sleep, and remember that lying in a horizontal plane allows your pelvic organs to return to their non-pregnant position, working with gravity.

Restoring the strength and muscle tone of you abdominal muscles after giving birth is important in protecting your back from injury. Take special care when bending and lifting.

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