

After Your Vaginal Birth: What You Can Do



How to help your healing:

- ◆ **Ice the perineum.** Wrap ice in a thin cloth and put on the sore area for 15 minutes. Remove and repeat 2-3 times a day for as long as it gives you pain relief. Ice will help reduce pain and swelling and improve healing of the area.
- ◆ **Rest on your back or side.** Sit up to feed yourself or baby but spend time lying down to reduce pressure and swelling of the sore area.
- ◆ **Get in and out of bed from your side.** This causes less strain on your back and tummy muscles.
- ◆ **Move around in bed or walk within your room.** You will have fewer aches and less stiffness. This will also help your bowels to move.
- ◆ **Stand and walk tall.**
- ◆ **Avoid heavy housework and lifting.**

Why should I do any exercise right now?

Early exercise helps improve circulation of the blood, reduces swelling and improves muscle support of your pelvic and back bones.

What exercises should I do?

- ◆ start the following exercises immediately after giving birth
- ◆ repeat 3 times per day
- ◆ come to the Postpartum Physiotherapy Class before you go home (see back page)

1. Tummy Tucks

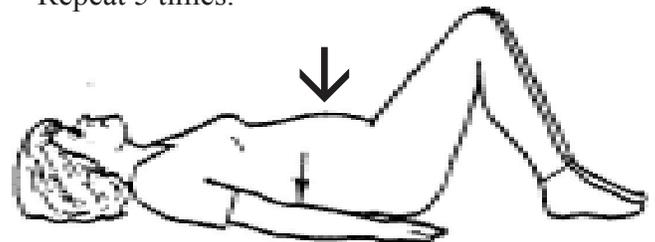
(transverse abdominus muscle exercise)

- ◆ help develop a flatter tummy
- ◆ reduce low back pain
- ◆ work with the pelvic floor muscles

How?

Pull the muscles below your belly button in toward your back bone as if putting on a tight pair of pants. Hold for a count of 5 while breathing normally.

Repeat 5 times.



Try this exercise lying on your back or side.

2. Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises (Kegels)

- ◆ improve or prevent bladder or bowel leakage
- ◆ help strengthen the muscles that support your pelvic organs
- ◆ help maintain good posture
- ◆ help strengthen your overall core

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Kegels:

1. Hold'ems:

Pull up and tighten your muscles as if to stop yourself from passing urine and gas. Hold for a slow count of 5. Relax completely. Rest 20 seconds before trying your next one. Repeat 5 times. When this becomes easy, hold longer (up to 10 counts) and repeat up to 10 times.

2. Speed'ems:

Tighten the pelvic floor muscles quickly and strongly. Hold only for 1-2 counts. Relax completely. Repeat 5 times. This exercise is important to help stop leakage when you cough, sneeze, laugh or lift. Progress to more when you are able to (up to 20).

- ◆ kegels should not be painful when doing the exercise
- ◆ no glute (butt) squeezing
- ◆ easiest to do in lying position

It takes time for your pelvic floor muscles to heal and work properly. You might have little or no control of your urine during the first day or so. This is common.

Postpartum Physiotherapy Class

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, Wednesday or Friday

Room 2N41B
(opposite Balsam Square)

This free one hour class will show you:

- how to care for your back
- good postures while caring for your newborn
- how to begin early postpartum exercises safely

This is **not** an exercise class.

Please come as you are and your newborn is welcome in cot or carrier.

Plan to attend one class:

- prior to going home
- anytime after going home during the 6 weeks postpartum time
- phone 604-875-2126 to register if attending after going home