

This handout contains some basic exercises to help you get started during the first 6-8 weeks after having your baby. These are safe for both vaginal and cesarean birth deliveries.

1. PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE EXERCISES (Kegels)

- ▶ improve bowel and bladder control
- ▶ improve support for your pelvic organs
- ▶ help your overall “core” muscle strength

The following are 2 examples of Kegel exercises:

Speed’ems: Pull your pelvic floor muscles up and in, quickly and strongly as if to stop your pee. Release quickly and completely. Try doing several in a row until your muscles begin to feel tired. Start with 5 and over time work up to doing 30 in a row. Try not to use your seat muscles. This exercise helps stop urine from leaking when you cough, sneeze, laugh or lift.

Hold’ems: Pull your pelvic floor muscles up and in quickly and strongly. Continue to pull up strongly and hold for a few seconds, then let go. Start with only 3 and hold for 3 seconds. Rest between each one. Over time your goal is to do 10 in a row, holding for 10 seconds. This exercise helps improve and maintain your pelvic floor muscle strength.

- ▶ do kegel exercises 3 times a day
- ▶ doing a few exercises correctly is better than many poorly
- ▶ do a kegel whenever you cough, sneeze, laugh or lift.

2. STOMACH MUSCLE EXERCISES

- ▶ A strong back needs strong stomach muscles.
- ▶ Remember to breathe during the exercise (avoid holding your breath).
- ▶ Start with 5 repetitions, 2 times per day. As you feel stronger, do more.

Note: If you feel a wide gap between the edge of your stomach muscles or see a bulge along the centre of your stomach, check with a Physiotherapist before you continue with these exercises.

BEGINNER EXERCISES:

a) Tummy Tucks (deep stomach muscle exercise):

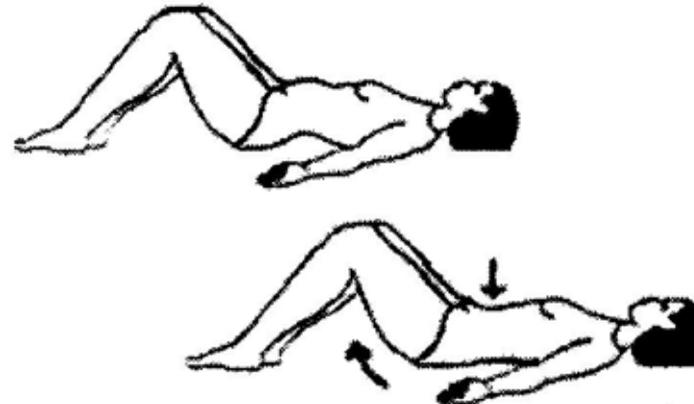
Let your belly sag! Breathe in normally and as you breathe out, gently draw in the lower part of your stomach, pulling up and in with your pelvic floor muscles at the same time. Pause and then let go. Don’t move your back at any time. You should be able to breathe and talk while you exercise.



b) Bent Knee Fall-Out: While lying on your back with your knees bent, tighten your lower stomach muscles as in tummy tucks (a). Keep breathing and keep your stomach muscles firm and pelvis still while you slowly let your right knee fall out to the right a few inches, then back to the centre. Relax. Repeat with the left knee.



c) Pelvic Tilt: Pull in your lower stomach muscles, tuck your seat under and flatten your back. Hold for 10 seconds, then relax and feel the low back curve return. (try this exercise when lying on your side or back and when standing against the wall)



d) 4 Point Kneel: When it is comfortable to be on your hands and knees you can progress to this exercise. Start with a relaxed belly. Breathe in normally and as you breathe out, gently draw in the lower part of your stomach (below the belly button). There should be no movement in your back.



ADVANCED EXERCISES:

Once you can do the above exercises easily you can try these:

e) Knee Lifts: Do the tummy tuck exercise in (a) above and hold. While holding, slowly lift one foot off the floor. Pause. Slowly lower your foot back to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.



f) Heel Slides: Do the tummy tuck exercise in (a) above and hold. While holding, slide your right heel away from you as you straighten your leg slightly. Slowly return to starting position. Repeat with your left leg.



g) Head Lift: Do the tummy tuck exercise in (a) above and hold. While holding, lift your head and look at your knees, pause and return to your starting position slowly.



Remember:

- ▶ Tighten your pelvic floor muscles while you do the stomach muscle exercises.
- ▶ Continue to breathe while exercising or lifting and during everyday activities.
- ▶ Do not do the next exercise if your stomach is bulging or gapping as you exercise. (if you are not sure, check with a Physiotherapist)
- ▶ These simple exercises will help you tone and firm the muscles stretched during your pregnancy.

3. EXERCISE GUIDELINES

- ▶ Make time each day for a moderate amount of exercise (for example: 30 minutes of walking)
- ▶ Do not do jumping and jarring activities while your stomach and pelvic floor muscles are weak (at least 6 weeks postpartum)
- ▶ Start slowly and if you feel any pain stop, wait a couple of weeks before trying the activity again.
- ▶ Go at your own pace. It may take several weeks or months before you get there.
- ▶ You may wish to join a postpartum exercise class. Check for locations with your local Health Unit or Community Centre.

4. BACK CARE

- ▶ When you lift, bend from your knees and hips, not with your back. Remember to tighten your inner core muscles (kegel and tummy tuck) and breathe out as you lift.
- ▶ Stand and walk “tall”

5. RELAXATION

Make time to REST everyday. You will recover more quickly from the stresses of your pregnancy and the birth of your baby if you are well rested. Use any relaxation technique that you like.

Postpartum Physiotherapy Class

10:00 - 11:30 am

Monday, Wednesday or Friday
Room 2N41B (opposite Balsam Square)

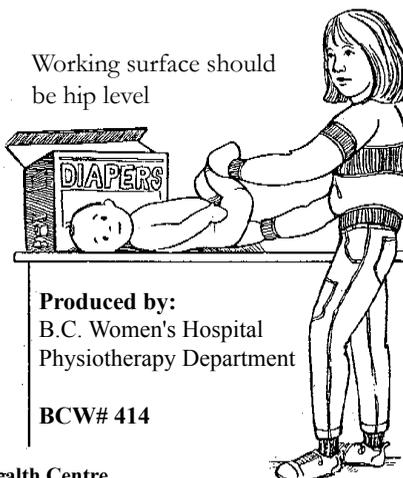
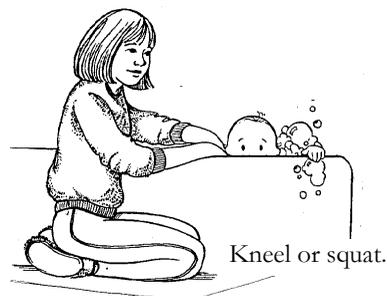
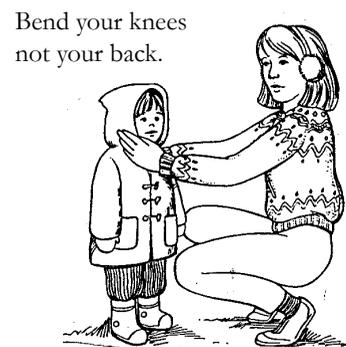
This free one hour class will help you:

- ▶ learn exercise/activity guidelines and precautions for the early postpartum period
- ▶ learn back care techniques
- ▶ begin postpartum exercises correctly

Plan to attend one class:

- ▶ if possible, prior to discharge OR
- ▶ anytime after discharge (during the 6 week postpartum period)
- ▶ Phone 604-875-2126 to register if attending after discharge

PROTECT YOUR BACK



Basic Exercise Guidelines For After You Have Had Your Baby



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