

Information for Patients

Post Natal Exercises

As recommended by the Physiotherapy Department



An Exercise Advice and Information Leaflet



Contents

Start Within 24 hrs of Giving Birth	3
Pelvic Floor Exercises	3
Ankle Exercises	4
Tummy Toner	4
Tummy and Pelvic Tilt	5
Rest and Relaxation	5
After 3-5 Days, Start the Following Additional Tummy Exercises	6
Curl Ups	6
Knee Roll	6
Hip Hitch	7
Sitting and Feeding	8
Posture	8
Lifting	9
General Information	10

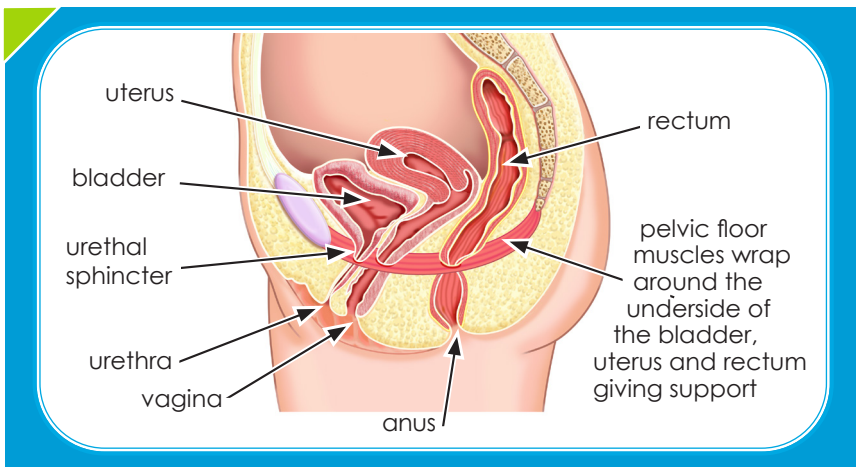
Start within 24hrs of giving birth

1. Pelvic Floor Exercises

Sit or lie comfortably with your knees apart. Concentrate on the sling of muscle between your legs and especially round the back passage.

Now tighten round the back passage as if you are trying to stop yourself passing wind. To do this you must squeeze the muscle round the back passage. At the same time picture yourself trying to stop the stream of urine by pulling and tightening the muscles upwards and inwards. Your buttocks and legs should not move at all, and avoid holding your breath.

Side view of a woman's bladder and related structures



Practising your pelvic floor exercises

- Stand, sit or lie with your knees slightly apart. Slowly tighten and pull up the pelvic floor muscles. Hold for 5 seconds if you can, then release. Once you have got used to the sensation, try to tighten a little harder. Repeat 5 times (Slow pull ups).

- Now pull the muscles up Quickly and tightly, then release immediately. Repeat 5 times (Fast pull ups).

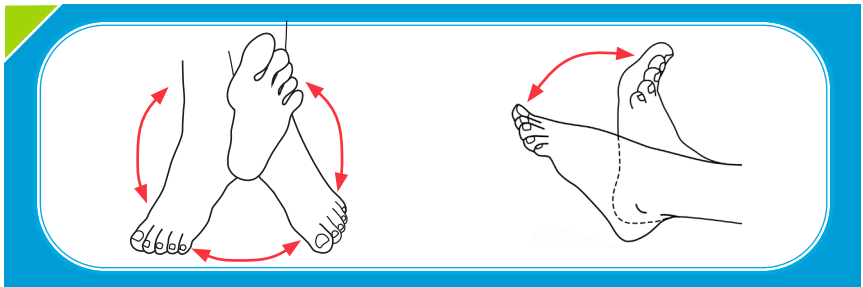
As the muscles get stronger you will be able to hold for longer than 5 seconds, and that you can do more than 5 pull ups without the muscle getting tired.

Your aim is to increase the number of pull ups to a maximum of 10 and to hold each tightening for 10 seconds.

2. Ankle Exercises

Briskly bend, stretch and circle with the ankle for 20-30 seconds at a time.

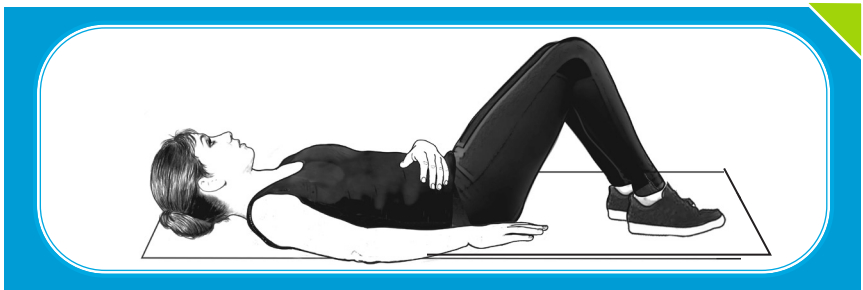
It will keep you comfortable, prevent or reduce swelling and other possible complications.



3. Tummy Toner

Lie on your back with your knees bent, one hand resting on tummy, breathe in slowly, feeling tummy rise.

Sigh the air out, pulling tummy in as flat as you can. Relax.



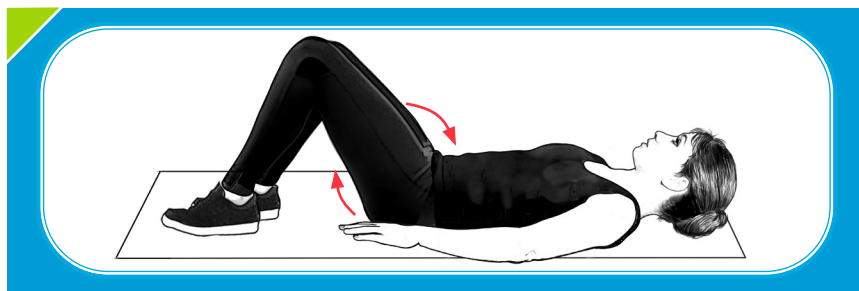
4. Tummy and Pelvic Tilt

Lie with your knees bent.

Pull in your tummy, press the small of your back down on the bed. Hold that position for several seconds, then relax.

You will be aware of the tilt and rock movement of your pelvis.

Repeat this 5 times.

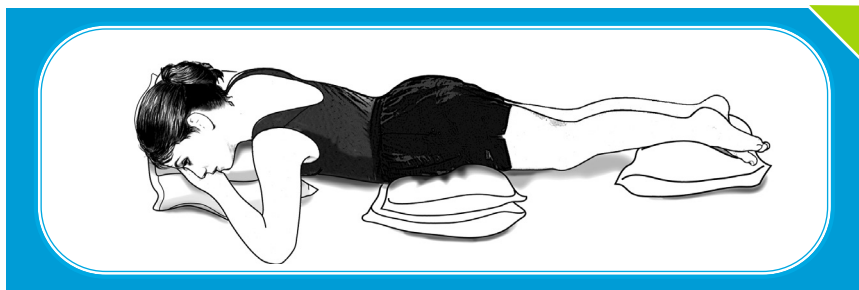


5. Rest and Relaxation

Position a pillow at both the head and foot end of the bed.

Place two pillows in the middle of the bed for under your hips.

Lie on your tummy over the arranged pillows for 30 minutes twice a day. You should find this a comfortable position.



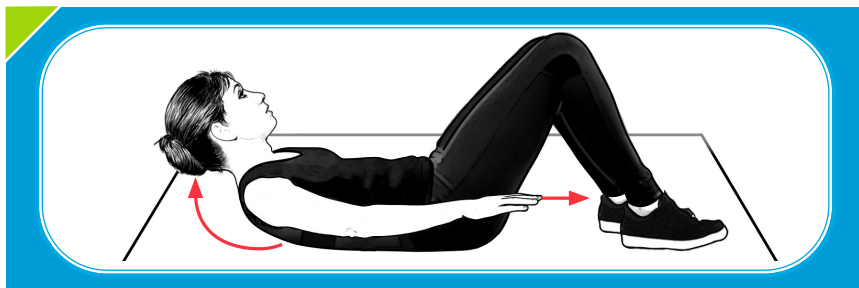
After 3-5 days, start the following additional tummy exercises.

6. Curl Ups

Do a pelvic tilt as previously described. Lift your head and shoulders off the bed, stretching your hands towards your feet.

Count to 4, then lie back and rest. Repeat 5 times.

If you notice any 'bulging' of the abdomen, then stop curl ups and continue with exercises 3 and 4 instead.

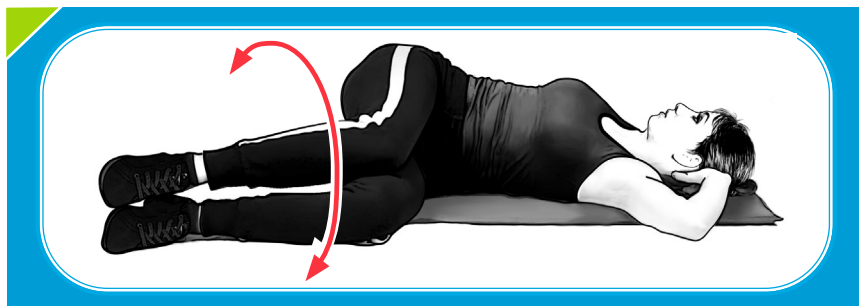


7. Knee Roll

Lying on your back with your knees bent, pull in your tummy and slowly roll both knees gently to one side of the bed.

Raise them to the midline and lower to the opposite side. Only go as far as you find comfortable.

Repeat 5 times to each side.



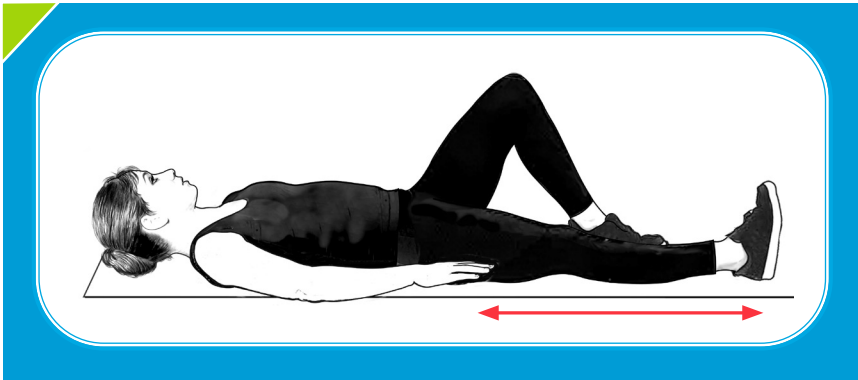
8. Hip Hitch

Lie on your back with one knee bent.

Pull tummy in and lengthen the straight leg by stretching it down with the heel away from you.

Keeping the leg straight, hitch and shorten it upwards to your waist.

Repeat 5 times. Change legs and repeat.



WARNING: please do not attempt to do sit up or double leg lifts at ANY time. These 2 exercises could injure your back, and they put excessive strain on internal organs and pelvic floor muscles.

REMEMBER if you are in any doubt about exercises then contact your GP, midwife or obstetric physiotherapist.

8. Sitting and Feeding

Sit well with your back supported using a pillow or cushion.

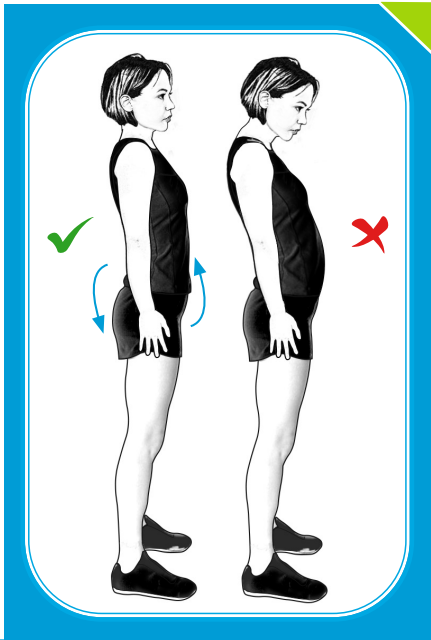
Place your feet on a small foot stool and you will find you sit more comfortably.

Hold your baby supported on a pillow on your lap.

This should enable you to feed your baby without getting any aches in your shoulders and arms.



9. Posture



Stand tall, pull tummy 'up and in' and tuck bottom 'under'.

Even this will work the tummy muscles and help prevent backache.

10. Lifting

Avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby for the first few weeks.

If it cannot be avoided, bend hips and knees, tighten tummy and pelvic floor muscles and keep the load close to your chest.



Start within 24hrs of giving birth

Bowels

If you have had stitches you may be anxious about opening your bowels. To relieve any discomfort, support your stitches with a pad, or toilet paper made into a pad. Hold this firmly against your perineum and over the stitches as you go to the toilet. Avoid any delay, as constipation can put more pressure on that area.

Piles

Try lying on your tummy with several pillows under your hips twice a day for 30 minutes. This relieves some pressure. Ice packs to this area can be soothing.

Coughing Laughing Sneezing

Puts considerable strain on your pelvic floor muscles. Remember to tighten them before the action occurs.

Stitches

If you are still tender after 6 weeks (when opening bowels, or during intercourse) do report this to your doctor at your post natal check up.

Bladder / Waterworks

Do not be satisfied with less than full control of your bladder and bowels. If in any doubt, consult your doctor who may refer you for Physiotherapy.

Keep Fit

Avoid strenuous exercises in the early weeks. Walking is easy to start off with, increasing in briskness. Cycling is good once your bottom is comfortable. You can commence swimming after 5 or 6 weeks.

Sport

Do not return to this until you have regained full control of your bladder/waterworks. Jump up and down 4 or 5 times with a fairly full bladder; try a cough; run up and down the stairs several times. If you lose a little control of your bladder and 'leak' then you are not ready to return to vigorous activity. Remember the effects of pregnancy.

Remember the effects of pregnancy hormones can still affect your joints for 3 - 6 months after the birth.



If you require any further information,
please contact:

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For physiotherapy advice and self care
information, visit:

<http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/your-services/all-services-a-z/physiotherapy/>

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