

POST NATAL PHYSIOTHERAPY ADVICE

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy



The abdominal hollowing exercise ('core exercise')

Start doing this exercise in the most comfortable position for you; for example, lying on your back or side with your knees bent, or sitting with your back well supported.

- Place one or both hands on your abdomen, below the level of your belly button. Breathe in through your nose, and as you breathe out, draw in your lower abdomen, pulling it gently away from your hands towards your back and then relax.
- You should be able to breathe and talk while you are doing this exercise and your lower back should stay still.
- Once you have learnt this exercise, you should be able to practise it in standing. To progress further, repeat as above, but keep your muscles drawn in for 3 seconds while you continue to breathe in and out normally.
- You should feel the muscles working under your hand, and you will gradually be able to hold for longer, until you reach 10 seconds and can repeat for a maximum of 10 times. Do this 3 times a day or as often as you can.
- Use this hollowing technique throughout the day - before and during any physical activity requiring effort; for example, when lifting.
- You may also feel these muscles working as you do the pelvic floor muscle exercises.



If you notice any bulging of your abdominal muscles while doing any of the following 4 exercises, stop the exercise, return to abdominal hollowing and seek advice from your specialist physiotherapist.

The next exercises are also useful in helping to relieve wind and nausea following a Caesarean section operation.

Start all exercises by lying with your head on a pillow, knees bent, with your feet on the bed a shoulder width apart, and arms by your side.

Pelvic tilt

Hollow your abdomen as described above, tighten your pelvic floor muscles, and flatten your lower back into the bed as your pelvis tilts. Breathe normally. Hold the position for 3 seconds and release gently. Repeat this up to 10 times, 3 times per day. The pelvic tilt exercise can be particularly helpful for maintaining abdominal muscle strength, correcting posture, and easing back pain. Progress by doing this exercise when in sitting, standing, crook lying, kneeling, or lying on your side.

Knee bends

Hollow your abdomen, keep your back flat on the bed, and bend one hip and knee up as far as is comfortable. Hold up to the count of 10, and then bring the leg down so that the foot is back on the bed. Repeat with the other side.



Do this 3 times with each leg if you are able. Repeat 3 times per day.

Knee rolling

Hollow your abdomen, and gently lower both knees to the right as far as is comfortable. Bring them back to the middle and rest for a few seconds. Hollow your abdomen again and repeat to the left. Do this 3 times each side if you can.



Head lift

If you have neck pain, **DO NOT** do this exercise. Lie on your back with your head resting on two pillows.

Hollow your abdomen and tighten the pelvic floor muscles as you gently lift your head and shoulders a little way off the pillows. Hold for 3 seconds, lower and relax. Repeat this up to 10 times, 3 times a day, if you can.

Progress by removing one pillow and ensure that you do not strain your neck muscles as you do this exercise.



Progress by increasing the number of repetitions of each exercise up to 10.

Exercise Advice

There are many good reasons to exercise but start gradually. You should do the exercises given to you in this booklet, or by the physiotherapist while in hospital, and continue them when you return home:

- The effects of pregnancy hormonal changes can still affect your joints for up to 6 months, so care should be taken not to start high-impact activity too soon.
- Brisk walking is an excellent way to exercise. Be careful to build up slowly. Gradually increase the time and pace of your walking every day during the first 6 weeks.
- You can start swimming once you have had 7 consecutive days clear from vaginal bleeding/discharge. If you have had a Caesarean section operation, it is sensible to wait until you have seen your GP at your 6-week check-up.
- Always **listen to your body** and do not cause pain.
- People recover their physical fitness at different rates. If you have exercised regularly prior to your pregnancy, you may be able to return more quickly, but avoid impact-based exercises until after your GP check-up.
- Many women feel extremely tired, so do not overdo it. Pace yourself, accept offers of help, and set aside a regular time to rest.

Additional Advice

Back care - this is good advice for life

Your pelvis is often not as strong after delivery and can take some time to build this strength back up. You can easily strain your back during this time, so avoid heavy lifting. If you do have to lift:

- bend your knees if the weight is at a low level
- hollow your abdomen (use your deep tummy muscles)
- tighten your pelvic floor muscles
- breathe out as you lift

Sexual intercourse

Many women find it difficult to return to sexual activity. Some women prefer to wait 6-8 weeks until they have had their GP check-up, but others want to wait longer. If there are no physical problems, you can resume intercourse when you are ready. Start gently and use lubrication if required.

If you have persistent discomfort, pain or difficulties returning to sexual activity, seek further help from your GP.

Contact details

If you need any further support or advice, you can contact one of the team below;

POGP Physiotherapists

Tel 01932 722547

Email asp-tr.stpetersphysioappointments@nhs.net

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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Department: Pelvic Health Physiotherapy

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Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

Ashford Hospital
London Road
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 3AA
Tel: **01784 884488**

St. Peter's Hospital
Guildford Road
Chertsey, Surrey
KT16 0PZ.
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk