Post Natal Exercises
Taking care of yourself

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Post natal exercises, taking care of yourself

This leaflet offers direction on safe and effective exercises to help you get into shape. This promotes comfort, recovery and helps to prevent health problems during your post natal period.

Aim to start your post natal exercise on the first day after delivery. Start gently, progress when it is comfortable to do so and continue for life.

Day 1

To improve circulation in your legs and reduce and prevent swelling, briskly circle, or bend and stretch at the ankle for 20-30 seconds as often as possible.
Pelvic floor exercises

These muscles have been very stretched during pregnancy and delivery. If allowed to remain weak, exertion incontinence, vaginal slackness or prolapse may result.

Exercise will:

- Encourage healing and help ease discomfort
- Maintain and improve bladder control
- Improve the support for the pelvic organs
- Enhance sexual intercourse

To exercise

Imagine that you are trying to stop wind and at the same time trying to prevent the flow of urine. This **squeeze and lift** is your pelvic floor exercise.

Start with short quick contractions

- Squeeze, lift firmly and let go
- Repeat four or five times
- Aim to increase to 10
- Use this quick reaction to stop you from leaking urine when you cough or sneeze
On about day 3

• Squeeze and lift as before and hold for as many seconds as you can and let go slowly. Progress this hold to a maximum of 10 seconds
• Rest for four seconds
• Repeat the exercise at least four times
• Repeat the above throughout the day
• This will help to build up the strength of your pelvic floor muscles

Link your exercises with an activity, for example feeding your baby, having a drink or washing up.

Remember

Pelvic floor exercises are for life. It may take three to six months to get good results.

When you have improved, exercise twice a day for the rest of your life.
For comfort and to reduce the pressure on your perineum when opening your bowels adopt the position shown and use a sanitary towel for support.
Abdominal exercises

• To help prevent backache and pelvic pain
• To improve posture
• To increase abdominal tone
• To increase pelvic core stability

1. Pelvic Tilting

• Pull in your tummy muscles
• Press the small of your back onto the bed
• Hold this for approximately a count of two
• Slowly let go
• Repeat several times, aim to increase to 10 at least two to three times a day

This exercise can also be done in a side lying, sitting or standing position.
2. Knee Rolling

- Lie with your knees bent and your feet resting on the bed
- Pull in your tummy muscles
- Take both knees gently to your right side as far as it is comfortable
- Repeat this to your left side
- Repeat several times as comfortable
3. Start to exercise the transverse abdominis muscle

The deep abdominal muscles can be felt at the front of the pelvis

- Sit with your feet flat on the floor and your back well supported.
- Place your hands below the level of your tummy button
- Breathe in to prepare, as you breathe out gently tighten your pelvic floor muscles **nip**
- Gently draw your belly button back and up towards the spine, hold **zip**

Increase the number of seconds you hold until you reach 10.

Do the nip and zip exercise in any position, for example standing or side lying. Start using the muscles functionally for example:

- When moving from a sitting to a standing position
- Walking
- Going up and down stairs
- Lifting your arms above your head when reaching up to a shelf
- Reaching forwards into the boot of a car

Always engage the core muscles when lifting.
4. After 6 weeks progress to include the following exercises

Progress this exercise by doing it on your hands and knees

- ‘Nip and zip’ to prepare
- Tuck your bottom in
- Push through your arms to arch your back
Taking Care of Your Back

Your back will be vulnerable for five to six months after delivery. In addition to the abdominal exercise, remember to take care of your back during everyday activities.

This will help to prevent strain and discomfort whilst:

- **Standing**  
  Stand and walk tall with a stretched spine. Feel your bottom and tummy tucked in.

- **Sitting feeding baby**  
  Have your back supported. Legs uncrossed and supported. Baby supported by a pillow on your lap.

- **Nappy changing**  
  On a surface which is level with your waist.

- **Lifting**  
  Always bend your knees. Hold things close to your body. Keep your back straight. Avoid twisting.

Exercises should be carried out strictly as instructed by your physiotherapist. Should you not carry out these exercises as recommended or not do them as regularly as you have been requested to, you do so at your own risk and the Trust accepts no liability for such misuse.
Would you like to comment on this leaflet?

Meeting the needs of patients and carers is at the centre of everything we do. We hope that you found this leaflet useful and informative. If you would like to comment on it, please contact Women’s Health Physiotherapy, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone (01904) 725389.

Teaching and Training

York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is involved in the teaching or training of medical staff who may be in attendance at some patient consultations. However, there is an 'opt out' option for any patient who prefers to see a doctor without training medical staff in attendance.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can be contacted on telephone number 01904 726262, an answer phone is available out of hours or via email at pals@york.nhs.uk.
Our Commitment to You

Our ultimate objective is to be trusted to deliver safe, effective healthcare to our community. You can find further details on our website: www.york.nhs.uk.

If you require further information please contact Women’s Health Physiotherapy on telephone number 01904 725389.

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