Post Natal Exercises
Taking care of yourself

For more information, please contact:
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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 your ankles regularly.
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

First imagine that you are trying to stop wind and then imagine you are stopping 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 several times, gradually aiming for 10

Repeat the above four times each 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.

maintain your pelvic floor by exercising twice a day for the rest of your life.
Tips for healthy bowels

For comfort and to reduce the pressure and strain on your perineum, when opening your bowels adopt the position shown and follow the advice below

- Place each foot on a small step or toilet roll to raise your knees above the level of your hips.
- You may use a sanitary towel to support your perineum.
- As you open your bowels avoid the temptation to hold your breath and push. Focus on breathing out.

Maintain your fluid levels; try to drink up to two litres a day. Try and eat a healthy diet including fruit and vegetables to assist your bowels.
Abdominal exercises

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

1. Pelvic Tilting

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat

- Pull in your tummy muscles
- Press the small of your back onto the bed
- Hold this for a few seconds
- Slowly let go
- Repeat several times, aim to increase to 10

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

Aim to pelvic tilt regularly through the day.
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 your support muscles**

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, as you breathe out draw the lower abdomen gently away from your hands towards your back.
  - It may help to imagine this as a ‘zipping’ action
- Hold for a few seconds while you carry on breathing
- Repeat several times, gradually holding for longer. Aim for 10 seconds

Try using this ‘zipping’ action 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 support muscles when lifting.
4. After 6 weeks progress to include the following exercises

Progress the ‘zipping’ exercise by doing it on your hands and knees
“Pelvic Tilt”

- Draw in your support muscles using your ‘zipping’ action
- Tuck your bottom in, tilting your pelvis forwards
- Gently arch your back, continuing up to your shoulders and look through your knees
- Relax your shoulders and back and finally your support muscles
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.** If you do not carry out these exercises as recommended nor 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.
Tell us what you think

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Women’s Health Physiotherapy, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone (01904) 725389.

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Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of staff and improve health and healthcare in our community. Staff or students in training may attend consultations for this purpose. You can opt-out if you do not want trainees to attend. Staff may also ask you to be involved in our research.

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Patients, relatives and carers sometimes need to turn to someone for help, advice or support. Our PALS team is here for you.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or via email at pals@york.nhs.uk

An answer phone is available out of hours.
Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format

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