

Information about
Post Natal Exercise (Pilates)



Hospital: _____

Telephone Number: _____



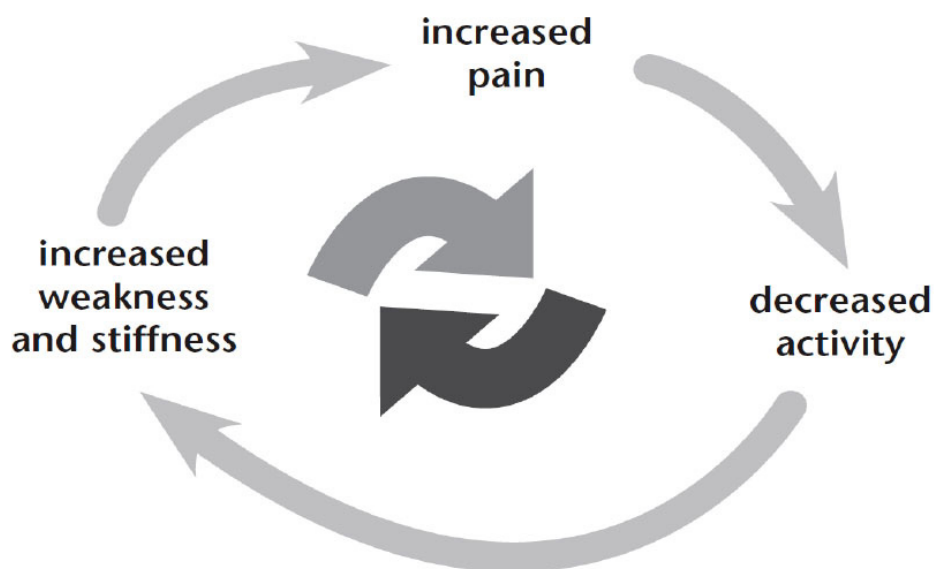
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Exercise Safety

These exercises are safe and suitable for all women six weeks after having your baby (post natal). If you have had a caesarean section then please wait until you have had your post natal check up before starting these exercises.

When starting to exercise again it is important to think about how much and how often as everyone is different. You may experience muscle discomfort after completing some of these exercises which is normal for your muscles to get stronger. Some people think discomfort is a reason to stop exercising completely. Avoiding exercise completely can lead to further pain, by causing increased weakness and stiffness. This is shown in the pain cycle below.



Useful tips to follow

- Do not exercise when you feel unwell or very tired.
- Do not set yourself targets that are too high.
- Progress might be slow and seem frustrating at times but do not be discouraged.
- If you experience discomfort apply a covered hot water bottle to the area and a small amount of rest can help.

However, if this pain lasts for more than 24 hours and is constant then you may want to stop and get medical advice from a specialised physiotherapist.

The Key Principles

The pilates-based exercises in this leaflet encourage the pelvic floor muscles to work with the deep tummy muscles. This will help support your spine and strengthen your pelvis as you begin to increase your daily activity levels, or consider returning to your normal exercise routine.

Before you progress onto the exercises in this leaflet you should have already attended a class or one-to-one session with a physiotherapist.

You should be familiar with the following exercises:

- **Pelvic Floor exercises**
- **Deep abdominal activation**
- **Pelvic Tilt**

You should be able to:

- Find neutral spine position and maintain throughout these exercises.
- Engage deep abdominals and gently lift pelvic floor muscles
- Remember to avoid bracing or tension through your lower back.
- Comfortable breathing throughout the exercises.

If you are unsure please refer to your post natal leaflets for a reminder of these exercises or speak to your physiotherapist, and practise if needed before progressing.

Before starting these exercises spend 2-3 minutes warming up and cooling down. Please see the stretch and mobility section on page 12 for simple ideas. Please see the last page for advice on number of repetitions and sets.

Hip and buttocks

1. Bridge

- Lie on the floor, knees bent and feet hip width apart.
- Breathing in and on your breath out begin to tilt your pelvis back to the mat and lift bottom off floor.
- Breathing in holding this position.
- Breathe out to lower.



Be aware: you are pushing your hips up to the sky and not arching your lower back.

2. Clam

- In side lying, knees and hips with a slight bend and rest one hand on your hip or the mat in front.
- Breathing in to prepare and breathe out to lift your top knee only, keeping ankles together.
- Lower knee back to starting position.



**Be aware: not to rotate your hips back as you lift your knee.
Harder option: Lift both feet off the mat during the exercise.**

Progression: Pulse knee for 10 seconds at the top.

3. Leg Lifts

- In side lying, legs straight and you should be able to see your feet when you look down.
- Breathe in to prepare and breathe out to lift top leg to hip height.
- Hold for a few seconds and breathe out as you lower your leg back down.



Be aware: Your back should not arch and you should not experience back pain during this exercise.

Progression: Start to pulse your foot up and down for 10 seconds then relax.

Stretch

- Lying on your back, knees bent.
- Place your right foot onto left knee and push your right knee away gently with your hand.
- Feel stretch in your right buttock.
- Hold for 30 seconds and breathe comfortably throughout the stretch. Change sides.



Abdominals

Before these exercises remember to breath comfortably throughout and not to hold your breath. Lightly engage pelvic floor by pulling up to prepare for the exercise and pull up your lower tummy muscles (deep abdominals). If you see any doming at your abdominals stop and go back to page two. You can check this by placing one hand on your lower tummy during the exercise you should not feel any pressure up into your hand.

1. Hip twist

- Lying on your back with knees bent to 90 degrees, find neutral pelvic tilt.
- Inhale to prepare and as your exhale roll one leg outwards away from your body.
- Inhale and roll your knee back inwards until both hips are in line
- Repeat alternating legs.



Be aware: Do not lose neutral lower back position when you roll one leg away. Focus on keeping your stationary leg still during the movement.

2. Scissors

- Lying on your back with knees bent to 90 degrees, find neutral pelvic tilt.
- Breathing in and as you breath out slide one heel towards the back of your thigh and lift into table top position as shown.
- Inhale to hold position
- Exhale to lower foot back to the mat
- Repeat alternating each foot.



Be aware: Do not lose neutral lower back position when you lift your foot.

Progression: Lift the arms up off the mat and do small pulses up and down with your hands throughout the movement.

3. One leg stretch

- Lying on your back with knees bent to 90 degrees, find neutral pelvic tilt.
- Inhale to prepare and exhale as you slide one heel along the floor away from your body.
- Inhale to slide your heel back along the floor to your starting position.
- Repeat alternating legs.



Be aware: Do not lose neutral lower back position when you slide your foot away.

Progression: Try and alternate left and right leg with minimal rest between.

4. Double leg stretch

- Lying on your back with knees bent to 90 degrees, find neutral pelvic tilt.
- Lift your arms up to the sky at shoulder width and height.
- Inhale to prepare and exhale as you slide one heel away and arms over head.
- Inhale as you slide your heel back and arms back to starting position.
- Repeat alternating legs and then back into rest position.



Be aware: Do not lose neutral lower back position when you slide your foot away.

Progression: Try and alternate left and right leg with minimal rest between.

5. Four-point kneeling arm or leg lift

Arm

- On hands and knees.
- Wrists under shoulder and knees under hips.
- Keep back and neck straight, keeping your gaze down between your hands.
- Lift one arm out straight, keeping your eye gaze forward to the mat.
- Return to start position and repeat other side. That is one repetition.





Be aware of your pelvis rotating; keep your hips level and neutral

Progress this exercise by holding your arm out longer for up to 30 seconds.

Leg

- On hands and knees.
- Wrists under shoulder and knees under hips.
- Keep back and neck straight, keeping your gaze down between your hands.
- Slide leg straight out behind, keeping back straight, gently squeeze buttock muscles.
- Return to start position and repeat other side. That is one repetition.



Be aware of your pelvis rotating; keep your hips level and neutral

Progress this exercise by holding the leg out longer for up to 30 seconds or keeping the leg up doing small pulses or circles with the leg.

Upper body and back

- Wall press up
- Standing close to a wall, take a step away.
- Place hands just wider than shoulder width apart and just lower than shoulder height.
- Feet hip width apart, engage core.
- Lean your body towards the wall, until your face is close to the wall
- Push back to start position



**Be aware of: arching lower back, curving upper back.
Keep your neck muscles relaxed.**

Progress this exercise by stepping further from the wall.

Stretch and mobility

The exercises improve flexibility and posture. You can use them as a warm up or cool down sequence.

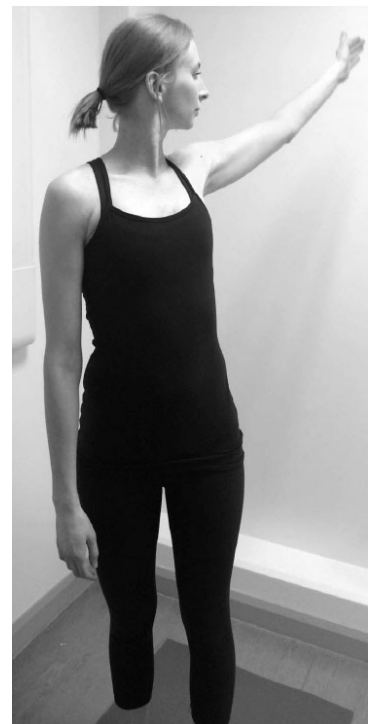
Roll down

- In standing, engage core and breathe in.
- Breathe out and start to roll down through spine.
- Start with head, shoulders, mid back then lower back.
- Breathe in and out holding stretch at the bottom.
- Inhale and roll back up.
- Repeat 3 times.



Arm circles

- In standing, engage core, arms forward at shoulder height.
- Circle left arm backwards, turn body but keeps hips forward.
- Repeat 5 each side.
- Repeat circling arms forwards.



Childs Pose

Sitting back on heels and arms stretched out in front.



Arm opening

- In side lying, with pillow under head, knees bent and arms straight out in front.
- Breathe in, then as you breathe out lift arm to open chest and twist spine.
- Follow your arm with your eyes.
- Feeling a stretch across your chest.
- Breathe in to hold stretch and breathe out to return to start position.
- Repeat 5 times then change sides.



Thread the needle

- In kneeling, breathe in to prepare.
- Breathe out and stretch the right arm under the left.
- Twisting neck and spine as far as comfortable.
- Breathe in to hold stretch and breathe out to return.



Strength and weight loss after having a baby

How much... how often?

The first time you do the exercises start with 1 set of 5-10 repetitions. Gradually, working towards 3 sets of 15 repetitions, which is recommended for strength and toning.

If you can do 3 sets of 15 repetitions with ease you can try the more challenging option, remember to drop back down to 1 set of 5-10 repetitions and progress gently.

Ideally the guidelines recommend 2 sessions of resistance training every week, however with a new baby, your routine has to fit around your lifestyle. For example, 2 x 15-20 minutes each week or 5 -10 minutes every day.

What are your goals?

While your goals may be to get back to your weight before pregnancy, this may take time.

There may be other goals that you may notice more quickly. Think of an activity you find difficult maybe due to pain or weakness. For example walking, feeding or lifting your baby from the car seat.

Set yourself a weekly goal of improving that activity. This can be a more realistic way to notice the benefits of exercise and feel rewarded.

Remember, this programme will be more effective if combined with activities such as walking, swimming or cycling. This type of activity is recommended 5 times per week, for 30 minutes. You should work at a level that makes you feel hot and breathe harder, but you are still able to speak full sentences.

Any questions

If you have any questions please ask your physiotherapist.

