

Exercises for Postpartum Healing

How long will it take for my body to recover after pregnancy?

Recovering from a pregnancy can take 6-12 weeks. The healing process can be slow and different from person to person. Give your body at least 6 weeks to heal from the physical effects of pregnancy. Rest, drink lots of water, and try to avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby during this time.

When can I return to my active lifestyle?

Healthcare professionals from different specialties agree that a phased approach (slowly returning to more difficult activities over time) is the safest and healthiest way to get back to your active lifestyle .

Starting within the first few weeks after your delivery, you may do gentle movement that does not require too much effort. As your recovery progresses and your body heals, you can slowly introduce activities and exercises that engage your muscles and build your strength. You can see a suggested phased approach for activity in the table below:

Weeks after delivery	Activities
Weeks 0-2	Pelvic floor and core exercises (see exercises 1-3 described below) Walking
Weeks 2-4	Walking for longer amounts of time Squats, lunges, and bridges with pelvic floor squeeze (see exercises 4 and 5 described below)

Weeks after delivery	Activities
Weeks 4-6	Low impact exercises (like step ups, yoga, squats, lunges, and bridges with light resistance bands or weights)
Weeks 6-8	Scar massage Power walking Increase time and difficulty of light exercise Adding resistance bands and hand weights for leg and core exercises Deadlifts
Weeks 8-12	Swimming Biking or spinning

Example exercises:

Spend about 10 minutes each day completing these exercises.

Exercise #1: Diaphragmatic breathing

1. Lie on your back with your hands on your stomach.
2. Breathe deeply in and out. Your stomach should rise as you inhale (breathe in) and fall as you exhale (breath out). When you exhale, imagine you are blowing through a straw for 5 seconds.
3. Complete 10 breaths this way.

Exercise #2: Kegel exercise with breathing

1. Lie on your back.
 - As you get more comfortable doing this exercise, you can switch to doing your Kegels while sitting and then while standing.
2. Breathe out while pulling your pelvic muscles up and in (as though you are trying to stop or hold in your pee).

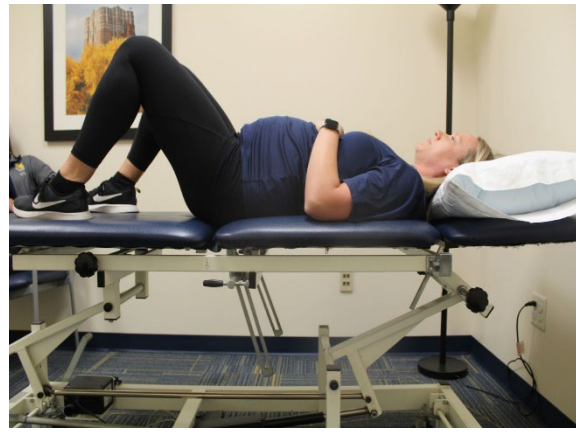
3. Breathe in and relax your pelvic floor by releasing your pelvic floor muscles.
4. Repeat this Kegel exercise 20 times.

Exercise #3: Posterior pelvic tilt

1. Lie on your back, with your knees bent at a 90-degree angle.
2. Squeeze your stomach muscles and flatten your lower back against the ground. Hold this position for 3 seconds and then relax.
3. Repeat this exercise 20 times.



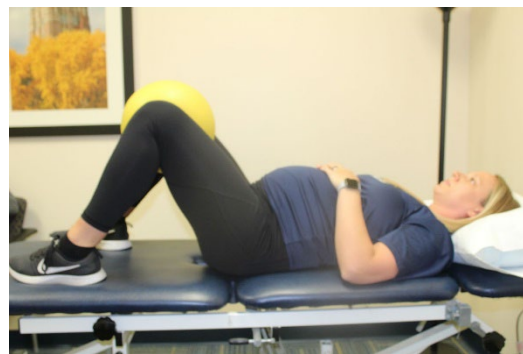
Step 1



Step 2

Exercise #4: Bridge and ball squeeze

1. Lie on your back, with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent at a 90-degree angle.
2. Place a medium-sized ball (about the size of a soccer ball) between your knees.
3. Gently squeeze the ball with your knees, and then relax.
4. Repeat this exercise 20 times.



Exercise #5: Squat and exhale

1. Stand with your feet apart (about the distance of your hips), with your toes pointing slightly out. If you'd like, you can also hold a weight in your hands.
2. Bend your knees and shift your weight toward your bottom, as if you were going to sit down on a chair.
3. Squat down (only as deep as you can comfortably), and then return slowly to a straight-leg standing position. When you rise out of your squat, exhale and squeeze your pelvic floor muscles (like you do for the Kegel exercise).



Contact your provider and request a referral to pelvic floor physical therapy if you experience:

- Painful sex
- Leaking pee or fluid from your bowels when you cough or sneeze
- Continued pelvic pain after doing any of the activities listed above

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