

## GETTING IN SHAPE AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN



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MARY

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**Having a baby and taking care of a newborn are hard work. It will take a while to regain your strength after the strain of pregnancy and birth. You should allow your body time to recover. But, as soon as you feel up to it, talk to your doctor about when you can start an exercise program.**

**This pamphlet explains**

- **The benefits of exercise**
- **Good exercises to get you started**
- **Programs to keep you going**

## Postpartum Exercises

Begin with 5 repetitions two or three times daily and gradually increase to 10 repetitions.

### First Day:

1) Abdominal breathing. Lying on your back, inhale deeply using the abdominal muscles. The abdomen should expand. Then exhale slowly through pursed lips, tightening the abdominal muscles.



2) Pelvic rocking. Lying on your back with arms at sides, knees bent, and feet flat, tighten the abdomen and buttocks and attempt to flatten back on floor. Hold for a count of 10, then arch the back, causing the pelvis to “rock.”

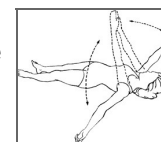


### Second Day:

3) Chin to chest. Lying on your back with legs straight, raise head and attempt to touch chin to chest. Slowly lower head.

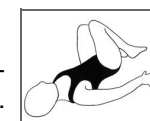


4) Arm raises. Lying on your back, arms extended at 90-degree angle from body, raise arms so that they are perpendicular and hands touch. Lower slowly.

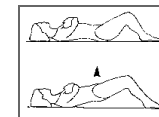


### Fourth Day:

5) Knee rolls. Lye on your back with your knees bent, feet flat, and arms extended to the side, roll knees slowly to one side, keeping shoulders flat. Return to original position and then roll to opposite side.



6) Buttocks lift. Lying on your back, arms at sides, knees bent, and feet flat, slowly raise buttocks and arch the back. Return slowly to the starting position.



### Sixth Day:

7) Abdominal tighteners. Lying on your back, knees bent, and feet flat, slowly raise head toward knees. Arms should extend along either side of legs. Return slowly to original position.



8) Knee to abdomen. Lying on your back, arms at sides, bend one knee and thigh until foot touches buttocks. Straighten leg and lower it slowly. Repeat with other leg.



Kegel exercises, begun before the baby is born, should be done many times daily when you are postpartum to restore vaginal and perineal tone.

- Squeeze the muscles that you use to stop the flow of urine
- Hold for up to 10 seconds, then release
- Do this 10-20 times in a row at least three times a day

*Healthy Beginnings Project*

## Benefits of Exercise

Daily exercise helps to restore muscle strength and tone, helps to prevent constipation, and can contribute to post-partum weight loss. It also raises your energy level and improves your sense of well-being.

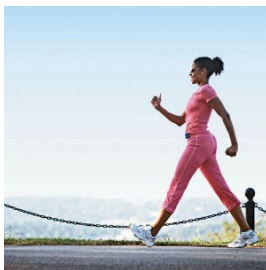
During pregnancy, the muscles in your abdomen stretch. It takes time for good muscle tone to return. Exercising helps tighten these muscles.

## When Can I Start?

Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Post-partal exercises can begin as soon as you feel ready, whether that is while you are in the hospital or weeks after you are home.

**\*Most women take a minimum of two weeks off from exercise after the birth of their babies.**



## Getting Started

- **Ease into your workout**– Start off gradually, giving your body time to warm-up. (Usually 5-10 min.)
- Start with easy pelvic floor exercises, basic core-strengthening exercises, and easy, short walks
- **\* A good program will make your heart and lungs stronger and tone your muscles.**
- Walking will prepare you for more vigorous exercise when you feel up to it and your baby can come along too!
- **Cool down as you finish**– Gradually slow down to your warm-up pace again. (Stopping suddenly can cause muscles to tear)
- Make sure you feel good after exercise, you don't experience any increase in vaginal bleeding, and you don't feel any other physical discomfort.
- **Stretch**- Right after your workout, before you sit down, take a shower, or relax in any other way stretch your muscles. Stretching allows you to walk, cycle, and swim faster and more easily than if you don't stretch and keeps you from being as sore.
- **Drink plenty of fluids**– Drink about 16 oz. to 32 oz. of fluid within 30 min. of completing your workout.

**\*Remember:** You want to stay at your target heart rate for at least 15 minutes. Your maximum heart rate is usually 220 minus your age and your target heart rate is 50-85% of the maximum.

**For Example:** If you are 25, your max heart rate is 195 and your target heart rate should be between 98-165.

## Your Exercise Program

<b>Do you prefer to exercise outside?</b>	Walking, Running, Riding a Bike, Skiing, Outdoor swimming pools could all be good options for you.
<b>Do you prefer to exercise indoors?</b>	Swimming, aerobics, yoga, indoor cycling, stationary bicycle, elliptical trainer, treadmill,
<b>Do you like exercising in a group?</b>	Join a gym, enroll in yoga, aerobics, or water aerobics classes. Avoid indoor exercise equipment unless you can set up a TV or other distraction in front of you.
<b>Do you prefer exercising alone?</b>	Use exercise balls, walking (indoors or outdoors), riding a bike (indoors or outdoors), stair stepping, or weightlifting.
<b>Do you want an activity that is calming?</b>	Yoga, swimming, and walking give you quiet time to meditate.
<b>Do you want activities that are inexpensive?</b>	Swimming and walking are among the least expensive activities you can find.

**\*Gradually lose the weight you need to lose—no more than 1/2 pound/ week.**



## Finally...

Exercising after you have your baby can help you get back in shape. It can improve your physical and mental well-being. Before you begin your exercise program, talk to your doctor. Follow the guidelines given here to start a safe and effective exercise program.

Cram, C., Stouffer, D., (2004). *Fit Pregnancy For Dummies*. NJ: Wiley Publishing Inc. (p. 53-60).

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