

# Exercise After Your Baby is Born

## What are the benefits of exercise after my baby is born?

Now that your baby is here, you may want to get rid of added pregnancy pounds and get back into shape. An exercise program can help you:

- Lose weight
- Reduce stress
- Tighten stretched abdominal and pelvic muscles
- Have more energy
- Lessen the feelings of depression that can happen after childbirth
- Prepare for the physical demands of parenthood

## When can I start exercising?

Once you have received the OK from your healthcare provider AND you feel ready, you can begin a gentle exercise program. Walking and gentle stretching and strengthening exercises are the best exercises to start with. You should avoid any rigorous exercise such as running or jumping for at least 6 weeks after the birth of your baby. If you had a C-section, you might also need to wait 6 weeks before you begin any abdominal strengthening exercises.

## What exercises should I do?

Walking is a good type of exercise to start with because it is gentle, you don't need special equipment, and you can bring your baby with you. Start with 15 minutes of walking at least 3 times a week. Try to increase this time 5 minutes each week. Once you are up to walking for 45 minutes, increase the intensity of your exercise by walking faster or walking up hills. After 6 weeks you may be able to start a jogging program if that is your goal.

Bicycling and swimming are also good choices. Yoga and Pilates classes for new mothers can also be helpful. Usually you can start this type of exercise 1 to 2 weeks after a vaginal delivery.

Kegel exercises can help strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor. The pelvic floor muscles help support the urethra, bladder, vagina, uterus, and rectum. You use them when you urinate, have bowel movements, and during sex. Your healthcare provider can teach you how to do Kegel exercises.

You can start doing exercises to strengthen your abdominal muscles when your healthcare provider says it's OK.

## How often should I exercise?

When you exercise, listen to your body. Don't push yourself too hard or too fast. Try to exercise at least 5 days a week. If you have to, exercise for short periods of

time during the day. Two 15-minute sessions can be just as good as one 30-minute workout.

## **How can I make the most of my exercise program?**

- Warm up and cool down with gentle stretches before and after your workout.
- Drink plenty of water before and after you exercise to keep from getting dehydrated.
- Try to eat a healthy diet to keep your energy level up.
- Nurse your baby or pump before exercising if you are breast-feeding.
- Wear a sports bra that fits properly.
- Make sure that your exercises are enjoyable, not stressful.
- Remember to be patient. It may take several months before you are as fit as you were before your pregnancy.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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