



# After Your Vaginal Birth: What You Can Do



## How to help your healing:

- ▶ **Ice the perineum.** Wrap ice in a thin cloth and put on the sore area for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove and repeat 2-3 times a day for as long as it gives you pain relief. Ice will help reduce pain and swelling and improve healing of the area.
- ▶ **Rest on your back or side.** Sit up to feed yourself or baby but spend time lying down to reduce pressure and swelling of the sore area.
- ▶ **Get in and out of bed from your side.** This causes less strain on your back, abdominal and pelvic floor muscles.
- ▶ **Move around in bed or walk within your room.** You will have fewer aches and less stiffness. This will also help your bowels to move.
- ▶ **Stand and walk tall.**
- ▶ **Avoid heavy housework and lifting** anything heavier than the weight of your newborn for the first month.

## Why should I do any exercise right now?

Early exercise helps improve circulation of the blood, reduces swelling and improves muscle support of your pelvic and back bones.

## What exercises should I do?

- ▶ start the following exercises immediately after giving birth
- ▶ repeat 3 times per day
- ▶ come to the Postpartum Physiotherapy Class before you go home (see back page)

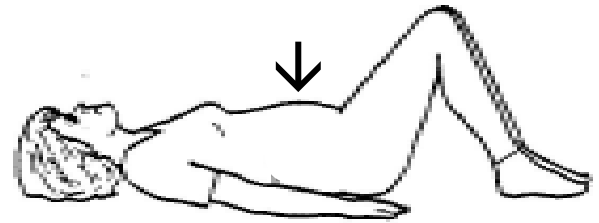
## 1. Tummy Tucks (transverse abdominis muscle exercise)

- ▶ help develop a flatter tummy
- ▶ reduce low back pain
- ▶ work with the pelvic floor muscles

### How?

Pull the muscles below your belly button in toward your back bone as if putting on a tight pair of pants. Hold for a count of 5 while breathing normally.

Repeat 5 times.

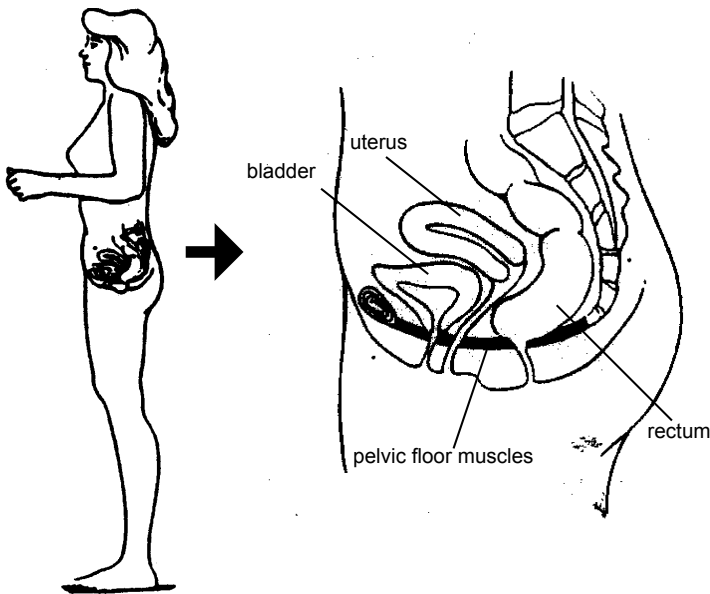


Try this exercise standing, lying on your back or on your side.

## 2. Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises (Kegels)

- ▶ improve or prevent bladder or bowel leakage
- ▶ help strengthen the muscles that support your pelvic organs
- ▶ help maintain good posture
- ▶ help strengthen your overall core

*cont'd...*



It is important to do your kegels 2-3 times a day. Over the next few weeks you should notice improvement. Keep doing the exercises and you will notice even more improvement.

### Helpful hints:

- ▶ pee regularly (every 2- 3 hours) during the first day or two
- ▶ drink plenty of fluids
- ▶ avoid drinks with caffeine such as coffee, black tea, and colas; these irritate your bladder.
- ▶ kegels will not damage your stitches

Some women have problems with leaking during pregnancy and after birth. If you have concerns, please call our department at 604-875-2126.

## Kegels:

### 1. Speed'ems:

Pull your pelvic floor muscles up and in quickly and strongly as if to stop urine or gas from leaking. Hold only for 1 or 2 counts. Relax completely. Do several in a row until your muscles begin to feel tired. When this becomes easy, do more (up to 30 in a row). This exercise is important to help stop leakage when you cough, sneeze, lift or laugh.

### 2. Hold'ems:

Pull your pelvic floor muscles up and in quickly and strongly as you did with Speed'ems but hold for a slow count of 5. Pull up more and more. Make sure you continue to breathe. Relax completely. Rest 10 seconds before trying your next one. Repeat 5-10 times. When this becomes easy, hold longer (up to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times).

- ▶ kegels should not be painful when doing the exercise
- ▶ no glute (butt) squeezing
- ▶ do kegels when sitting, standing and lying

It takes time for your pelvic floor muscles to heal and work properly. You might have little or no control of your urine during the first day or so. This is common.

## Postpartum Physiotherapy Class

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, Wednesday or Friday

Room 2N41B  
(opposite Balsam Square)

### This one hour class shows you:

- ▶ how to care for your back
- ▶ good postures while caring for your newborn
- ▶ how to begin early postpartum exercises safely

This is **not** an exercise class.

Please come as you are and your newborn is welcome in cot or carrier.

### Plan to attend one class:

- ▶ before going home
- ▶ after going home, anytime during the first 6 weeks postpartum
- ▶ phone 604-875-2126 to register if attending after going home