

Pelvic Floor Exercise

The pelvic floor muscles are a muscular hammock connecting the tail bone to the pubic bone and the "sitz" bones of the pelvis. These muscles help control the function of the urethra, vagina and anus. Following pregnancy and delivery, the pelvic floor muscles can be weakened and you may notice a leakage of urine with coughing or running.

Sit on a firm chair with feet on the floor and in an upright posture. Feel the body weight going through the "sitz" bones apart. Now you can focus on the pelvic floor. Imagine the vagina walls are a set of elevator doors and 'close the doors' by squeezing the pelvic floor muscles around the vagina and lift them up into the pelvis (move the elevator up the floors). Work up to a 10 second hold. Do 10 times. Then try 10 fast squeezes, see if you can maintain the power with each 'squeeze'. Don't hold your breath. This Exercise can be done when lying or standing. If you experience leakage when coughing, try contracting (squeezing) the pelvic floor before you cough.

Gaining control of your "core" muscles and utilizing these muscles while exercising, is the key to achieving optimum function in the lower back and pelvis. This may reduce your risk of low back and pelvic pain and long term problems such as uterine prolapse and bladder incontinence.

Consult a health care professional if you experience pain when exercising. For further core stabilization exercises, or if you have concerns about back pain, or pelvic floor muscle weakness, speak to Lynda Lawrence at Burrard Physiotherapy.



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POST NATAL EXERCISES



STRETCHES FOR THE SPINE &
REGAINING CONTROL OF YOUR
"CORE MUSCLES"

Post Natal Exercises

Stretching Exercises

Stretches should be done daily to reduce muscle tightness through the spine caused by adopting different postures while caring for your baby. If you find some muscles are particularly tight you will benefit from stretching up to four times a day. Stretches should be held for a minimum 15 seconds. Listen to your body and as you feel the tight area “give” you can ease further into the stretch for up to one minute. A stretch should not be painful. Try gentle deep breathing as you stretch to gain further relaxation of the muscles.

Lower Back Extensors Stretch

These muscles often become tight during pregnancy as the body adjusts to the increased size of the abdomen.

Start in a crawling position. Hands in line with the shoulders, and knees in line with the hips. Gently tighten the deep abdominal muscles and arch the back up to the ceiling. Maintain this arch and gently sit back onto the heels, You



may feel a stretch throughout the spine. While you are in this position take deep breaths and gradually sink further towards the heels.

Pectoral & Trunk Stretch

A good stretch to be done after feeding your baby.

1. Lie on your back with hips and knees bent. Raise arms to shoulder height and stretch out to the sides, so that the arms are resting on the floor. Don't lift the breast bone up to the ceiling.

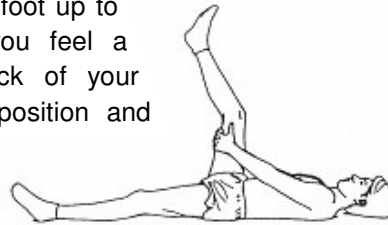


Breathe into this stretch.

2. Maintain position of the arms and gently twist both hips and knees to the right, until you feel a stretch in the trunk. Hold this position as you gently breathe until the stretch sensation subsides. Try to move further into the stretch.
3. Repeat the stretch moving the hips and knees to the left.

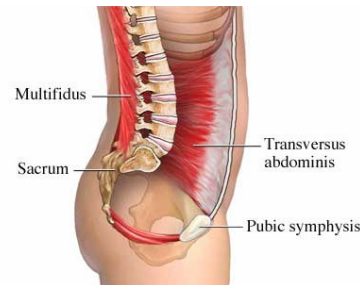
Hamstring Stretch

Lie on your back with one leg straight and support the other thigh with your hands. As you hold your thigh gently stretch your foot up to the ceiling until you feel a stretch in the back of your thigh. Hold this position and gently breathe until the stretch sensation subsides. Try to move further into the stretch.



Regaining Control of the “Core” Muscles

The core muscles are four muscle groups which are effective at stabilizing the low back and pelvis. They form a corset around the lower back and pelvis—a flexible cylinder of support. During pregnancy and delivery these muscles are compromised. They can be stretched, become tight, weak or may be torn. These four muscles are; the diaphragm, transversus abdominis, multifidus (deep back extensor) and the pelvic floor muscle group.



Deep Breathing Exercise

This exercise promotes use of the diaphragm and lower areas of the lungs which may be under-used in the later stages of pregnancy. Sit upright or lie on your back with the hips and knees bent. Place one hand on the side of the lower ribs. Take a full breath in and feel the lower ribs expand laterally. Repeat 5 times.

Transversus Abdominis

This deep abdominal muscle connects to the spine and wraps around the trunk like a corset. Lie on your back with hips and knees bent. Wrap your hands around the pelvic bones with fingers pointing towards the navel. This is where you will feel the muscle tensing. Take in a gentle breath and as you breathe out, gently ease the navel towards the spine, to make a hollow in the lower belly. Work up to a 10 second hold, but don't forget to breathe! Aim for 10 repetitions.



Stabilization Exercise

Adopt a crawl position, hands in line with the shoulders, and knees in line with the hips. You will use the transversus abdominis and the multi-

fidus muscles to keep your back stable. Don't arch your back. Tighten your deep abdominals by easing your navel up to the ceiling and feel a lift of the lower belly. Hold this position for 10 seconds and keep breathing!

Once you can do 10 repetitions of the above exercise, try this progression: In the 'crawl' pose, stretch one arm forward and off the floor. Then lower the arm.

Now stretch one leg out behind you. Then lower. With both of these moves, avoid twisting your back by using your 'core' muscles to keep the back stable. Repeat on both sides.

