

BACK CARE AND CORRECT BODY MECHANICS FOR NEW MOTHERS

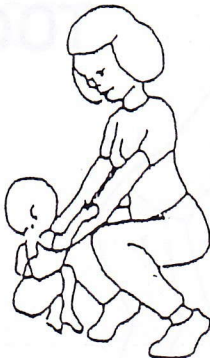
1. Sleeping Positions: Side lying or supine lying with pillows under knees naturally tilts pelvis backwards into a good position which helps to relieve post partum backache.

Resting Position: Prone lying over a pillow for 30 minutes per day will aid restoration of position of pelvic organs and uterus.

2. Bending, Lifting and Carrying Techniques:



- (i) When carrying baby - don't always carry baby on the same side.
- avoid twisting spine whilst carrying baby, i.e. don't perch baby on your hip unless you can keep your spine relatively straight.
 - whenever possible, carry baby in both arms in front of you.
 - baby slings (e.g. snuggly) allow small baby to be carried in front of you and the baby tends to be contented because he is close to you. But you must brace your shoulders back to maintain good posture and to reduce fatigue.
 - back packs are useful once baby can sit with minimal support, although to minimize fatigue, and strain you should keep rounding of your shoulders to a minimum and should try to avoid increasing anterior pelvic tilt in order to avoid back strain.



- (ii) Lifting baby out of crib or from floor:
- when lifting from a crib, put the side of the crib down.
 - when lifting from the floor or from a crib, bend hips and knees, keeping your back as straight as possible.
 - when baby is able to get into sitting or standing position, encourage him to get up so that you do not have to bend so far to lift him.

3. Baby Bathing: Baby bath should be a little above chair height so that you can sit comfortably whilst bathing baby. When using the big bath, kneel by the bath so that your back can remain as straight as possible. Lean onto the bath edge for extra support. When lifting your baby out of the big bath, get him to stand up if he is able, so that you do not have to lift him from so low. Use a non-slip bath mat in the bottom of the bath so that baby won't slip. The sudden strain in your arms if he did slip could injure your back.

4. Pushing stroller or carriage:
Choose a stroller or carriage of appropriate height for you. If it is too low, the forward leaning position that you will have to adopt will cause strain on your back and be fatiguing. Light weight strollers are preferable if you have to negotiate curbs, steps or shop doorways.
5. Standing:
When standing for long periods, try to put one foot up on a stool

6. Feeding Positions: (Breast or Bottle Feeding)
Sitting - Ensure that the arm supporting the baby is supported with a pillow or chair arm. Place foot on the same side as supporting arm up on a stool for added comfort.



Sidelying: For breastfeeding place your head on a pillow and cradle baby's head on your arm.

7. Changing baby: The change table should be of such a height that you can stand or sit comfortably to change baby. If you do not have a change table, use a bed or something of similar height and kneel by it.

JUST RIGHT!



TOO LOW!





The Postpartum Period

Those First Forty-Eight Hours

After the excitement and anticipation of labour and delivery, you and your baby are finally at home. Rather than feeling relieved and happy, you may find yourself overwhelmed by extreme anxiety and worry. Perhaps the following thoughts are running through your mind: "Is my baby getting enough milk?" "Am I breast-feeding correctly?" "Will I be a good mother?" "When will I get a good night's rest again?"

It helps to know that you're not alone with these feelings. The following words of advice from other new mothers may help:

1. You're not alone in feeling overwhelmed and anxious. You may also feel guilty about your feelings – after all, shouldn't you feel joyful and happy? Relax, these feelings are normal.
2. Get plenty of rest, whenever and wherever possible. Learn to nap when baby does.
3. You may feel too tired to have a nutritious meal or snack, but eating right is very important, especially if you are breast-feeding. You should also continue your prenatal/postpartum multi-vitamin and mineral supplement for at least three months.
4. Don't feel guilty about looking to your family and friends for support.
5. Take short breaks from the baby. Spend some time by yourself or with your family, not cleaning the house.

The "Blues"

In the first week postpartum you may find yourself feeling the "blues." Perhaps the feedings are not going well, or you're not getting enough sleep. You may have increasing doubts about your ability to cope with the 24-hour-a-day demands of mothering. You feel resentful – and guilty about the resentment – of being so tied down. Your partner seems just a little put out at all the time and attention you are lavishing on the baby. To top it off, you feel discouraged and weepy.

A number of factors contribute to these feelings of depression: hormones, fatigue, anxiety and fear about coping. Get as much rest as you can, and share your feelings with your partner. It's important that he understands the greater impact having a baby has on your life. It's also critical that you both work together to develop confidence in yourselves as parents.

Remember, not only is this postpartum state of mind very normal and common, it usually doesn't last long. In a week or two you and your partner will have become used to the new routine and the rewards of parenthood will become obvious. However, if you do continue to feel extremely anxious over long periods of time, it's important that you talk with your doctor.

Fatigue

Trying to take on too much, too soon, can exhaust you and make any emotional letdown even worse. It's important that you get the rest you need during the first two months after delivery. Try to alternate an hour of activity with an hour of resting with your feet up. Be a convalescent for the first week; pamper yourself for the next three weeks. By the end of the fourth week, you should be up to full activity, and in two months, you'll feel like yourself again.

Do's and Don'ts to Avoid Fatigue

Do get to bed early.

Don't have too many visitors the first week.

Don't climb stairs more than necessary.

Don't lift anything heavier than your baby.

Don't move furniture.

Do nap when your baby naps.

Do let your partner help with household chores, meals, and baby care.

Bathing

Showering and shampooing are fine any time after delivery, as long as you are steady on your feet. Many physicians prefer that you put off full tub baths until four to six weeks after delivery. But shallow baths in about four inches (10 cm) of warm water may be taken as soon as you get home. In fact, if you have uncomfortable stitches or hemorrhoids, such baths, also called sitz baths – three times a day, whether or not you are bleeding – are a soothing remedy.

Episiotomy Care

For cleanliness, keep a mild antiseptic solution in the bathroom. Use this to sponge the perineum (the area between the vagina and anus) after toilet use. Other than this, episiotomy wounds or perineal tears require no special care while they are healing unless they are painful. To relieve discomfort, take sitz baths (see above). Take ASA or acetaminophen. Apply an ice-collar between baths, or gauze soaked in ice-cold witch hazel.

Breast-feeding Worries

“How can I tell if my baby is getting enough milk?” This is a common question from new mothers who decide to breast-feed. With breast-feeding you can't measure the amount of milk your baby gets at each feeding. You needn't worry, however, as long as your baby continues soiling his or her diapers and gains weight steadily.

If you're following the basics of breast-feeding your baby is most likely getting exactly the nutrition he or she requires for a good start in life:

1. Make sure both you and your baby are comfortable during the feeding.
2. Your baby should be latching onto both your nipple and the areola.
3. Watch for a rhythmic motion in your baby's cheek. This is an indication that he or she is sucking properly.
4. Support your breast with the hand not holding your baby, but do not block the areola.
5. When baby is finished, break the suction by depressing your breast or placing your finger into the corner of your baby's mouth.
6. Try to have your baby feed on both breasts during a feeding, even if it means gently removing your baby from one breast and having him or her re-latch onto the other one.

Menstruation

If you do not nurse your baby, you can expect to menstruate again within four to eight weeks. The first menstrual flow may be heavy and contain clots; it may start, stop and start again. The second period should be more or less normal. If you are nursing, the flow may not appear. But if it does, don't worry. It will not interfere with nursing.

Contraception

Because of the wide choice of methods, as well as your individual needs and preference, plan to discuss contraceptive methods with your doctor during the first postpartum visit. The fitting of a diaphragm is usually postponed until the baby is about three months of age. Other methods of contraception can generally be used sooner.

Contrary to popular belief, the fact that you are nursing will not protect you from getting pregnant. Use a method of birth control, such as condoms and spermicide, during this time. Do not use birth control pills while breast-feeding.

Diet

Your doctor will tell you if you have any special diet needs. In general, you may eat anything you like, observing the guidelines of sensible nutrition. If you are breast-feeding, however, you will need about 1,000 calories a day more than usual and will probably need to drink a quart of milk daily. If you are nursing, you should also avoid alcohol and tobacco.

First Postpartum Visit

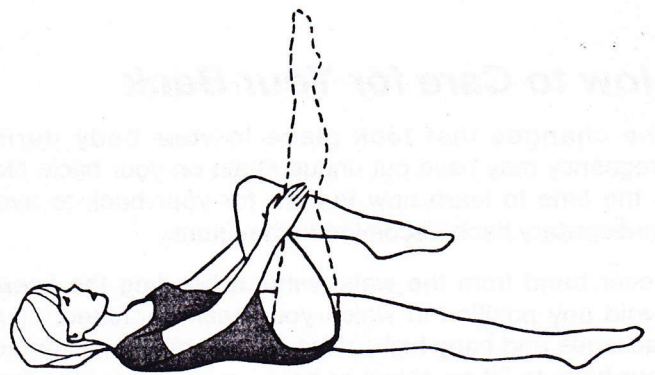
Unless you have a problem that requires seeing your doctor earlier, you should arrange for a follow-up examination no later than six weeks after the baby's birth. At that time, your general physical condition will be checked, your urine tested, your breasts and abdominal wall examined and a thorough pelvic examination will be carried out. Six months after the baby's birth, you should plan to have a Pap test and breast examination.

Postpartum Sex

Your doctor will advise you how long to wait before resuming sex (usually four to six weeks). Though you may well feel sexual desire before this period has elapsed, you would be wise to wait at least until after your first postpartum check-up. If you have had an episiotomy, intercourse may cause some discomfort at first. This can often be alleviated by a slight change of position, including the use of a pillow to raise the hips. Any other problems or questions concerning the resumption of sex should be talked over with your doctor. He is the best qualified individual to counsel you.



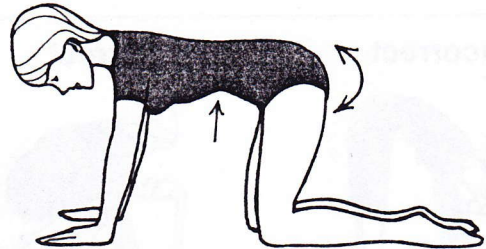
4. Shoulder circles – Placing your fingers on your shoulders circle your arms back, making small then larger circles. Repeat for 4 sets of four. (This exercise is good for posture and tired shoulders).



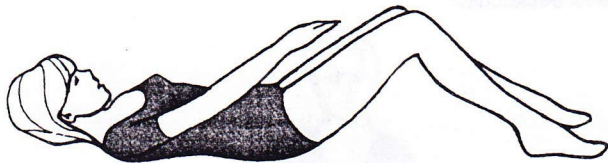
8. Leg stretch – Lying on your back, bring one knee up toward your chest holding it in your hands. Then straighten the leg moving your hands to hold your calf (if you can). Hold. Return the leg down by bending at the knee, then straightening it on the floor. Repeat with the other leg. Repeat again with a flexed foot.



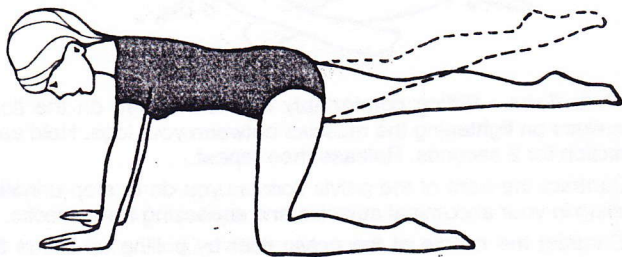
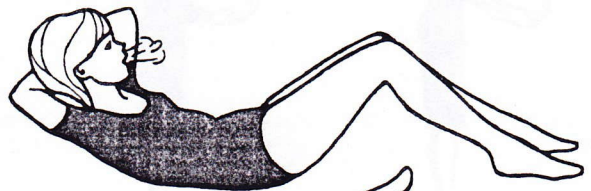
5. Strong stomach – Lie flat on your back with your knees bent. Cross your hands over your stomach to support it. Breathe in, then curl up, raising your head and shoulders off the floor as you breathe out. Slowly lower as you breathe in. Repeat. (Proper breathing is essential. In any exercise be sure to breathe out as you tighten muscles and breathe in when relaxing muscles).



9 Pelvic tilt/Hip sway – Kneeling on all fours, hold your back flat (without sagging), head level, tighten the stomach muscles by pulling them in and upwards. Tighten buttocks, and arch your back. Slowly relax. Repeat again slowly. To stretch each side, simply sway your hip left while turning your head to the left, then repeat the same thing to the right. Repeat. (These exercises can provide relief for lower back pain while strengthening stomach muscles).



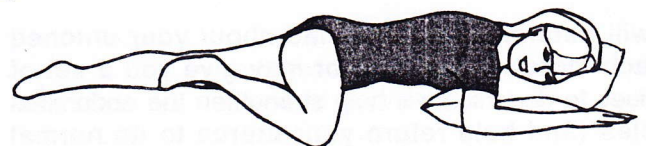
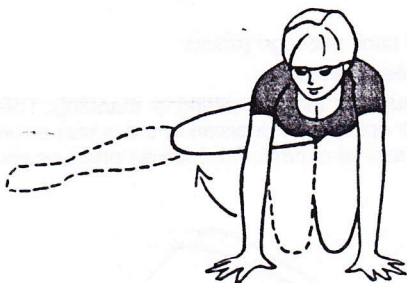
6. Diagonal curl ups – Lying with your legs bent, raise your head and then reach for (but not necessarily touch) your left knee with your right hand. Repeat, using your right knee and left hand. As with all these exercises, *don't forget to breathe out* as you come up and contract your abdominal muscles and breathe in when you relax them.



7. Leg lifts back and side – Staying on all fours, raise one leg straight out behind until parallel to the floor, then lower the leg and bend it keeping the movement continuous and controlled. Keep your head down, and your back straight by keeping your stomach in and avoid raising the buttocks. Repeat with the other leg. Then, on all fours, raise one knee to the side, straighten the leg, then bend it and return to starting position. Repeat with the other leg.



10. Head lift/Diagonal curl-ups – Lying on your back, knees bent with arms bent behind your head, keep your chin up and raise your upper body. Be sure to keep your bent arms back. Raise your head and the upper part of your body just a few inches as you breathe out, then slowly lower your head breathing in. Repeat. Next lift knee and shoulder and curl to one side, bringing opposite elbow to knee, repeat on the other side.



11. Relax – Relaxing the muscles you've worked is an important exercise in itself, so be sure to follow any exercising by cooling down. Lying down, in a relaxed position, alternately tighten and release all the muscle groups in your body working from feet to head. Remember to breathe in and out slowly and evenly. Then relax your whole body.

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How to Care for Your Back

The changes that took place in your body during pregnancy may have put undue strain on your back. Now is the time to learn how to care for your back to avoid unnecessary back discomfort in the future.

Never bend from the waist without bending the knees. Avoid any position in which your back is arched. Carry packages and baby high, close to your chest. Never twist your body to lift an object or baby up or down; face them squarely. In general, when seated, it is restful to the back to have the knees higher than the hips. You'll also find a rocking chair restful, as the back and forth motion changes the groups of muscles used.

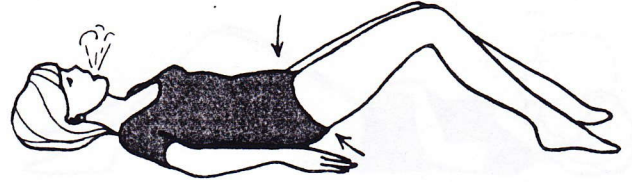


Exercise

You will naturally be concerned about your untuned stomach muscles. Your doctor may give you a set of exercises to do which will help strengthen the abdominal muscles (and help return your uterus to its normal position). If he doesn't, a good way to tighten and tone these muscles is to hold your stomach in. Practice pulling it in while you take several natural breaths; then relax. Repeat this throughout the day and make it a permanent habit. You will be surprised how effectively this simple practice restores muscle springiness and flattens your stomach.

11 Exercises after pregnancy

Now more than ever toning and strengthening your muscles is important. Start by doing the first exercise and then add one exercise each day. Be sure to check your posture and to breathe properly - exhaling when contracting muscles, inhaling when relaxing. Including time for exercising in your busy schedule now will make you feel better and help you get back into shape. Repeat each exercise 4 times daily, then build up to 10 or more, doing each as many times as you feel comfortable with for a period of a month to 6 weeks before progressing to more active exercising. Proceed more gradually if you have had a caesarean delivery. Check with your doctor concerning when it's best to start exercising.



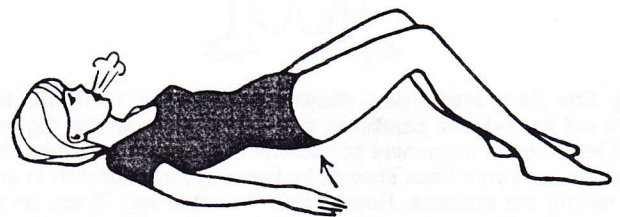
1. Pelvic tilt - Lying on your back, hands at your sides and knees bent, tilt your pelvis up by tightening your stomach muscles and flattening your back onto the floor. Blow out while pulling in your stomach muscles and pressing the curve of the lower back into the floor. Hold tightly. Relax as you breathe in. Repeat. Do this in other positions as well, such as standing and sitting to help your posture and relieve backache.



2. Pelvic floor - Sitting comfortably crossed-legged on the floor, concentrate on tightening the muscles between your legs. Hold each contraction for 2 seconds. Release then repeat.

- Contract the front of the pelvic floor as you do to stop urinating by pulling in your abdominal muscles and squeezing the buttocks.
- Contract the middle of the pelvic floor by pulling up inside the vagina, then slowly let it down and release. (Don't hold your breath as you do this).
- Contract around the back passage (anus).
- Lastly, pull up all three together.

Do these exercises throughout the day, sitting or standing. They will aid in the healing of your episiotomy (incision of the vulva) as well as improving bladder and vaginal control. Do them as often as you can for the rest of your life!



3. Bridging - Lying with your knees bent and arms at your sides for stability, contract your buttocks and stomach and breathe out as you raise your hips a few inches off the floor; hold, then slowly lower as you breathe in, relax. Repeat.

POSTNATAL EXERCISES

After your pregnancy, you may have gained a little more weight than you would have liked. An exercise program will help to restore your muscle tone as you get back into shape and will help you to lose a few of those pounds you didn't want.

The following exercises will strengthen the muscles in your abdomen, pelvis and chest, while helping you to improve your circulation and breathing, and maintain a good posture.

Ask your doctor before you start any exercise program. If you had a Cesarean birth, you should only begin the exercises after six weeks and your incision is healed. Postpone the abdominal exercises until then and thus avoid any abdominal strain.

Remember to wear comfortable clothing and good running shoes. Start the exercises with a warm up by stretching your arms and running on the spot for one minute. Pace yourself and start the exercises slowly. Do each exercise five to 10 times once a day. As you progress, you can work up to twice a day.

1. Posture

Avoid back strain when sitting or lying down. If you lift something, bend your knees to pick it up, keep your back straight and hold it up to your chest as you resume standing. Practice the following in front of the mirror:

- Stand with your back and knees straight but relaxed.
- Tighten your stomach muscles and tuck in your bottom.
- Hold your head up, with your eyes straight ahead.
- Keep your arms at your sides.



2. Straight-leg Raises



- Lie on your back, with your right knee bent.
- Lift your left leg up slowly as high as you can.
- Lower your leg slowly.
- Repeat the exercise with your left knee bent and right leg straight.
- Lift your right leg up slowly as high as you can and then lower it slowly.

3. Abdominal

These exercises are important to help flatten your stomach and build strong abdominal muscles. Rest on your stomach and tighten and relax your abdominal muscles occasionally. (Note: Avoid sleeping on your stomach, as this may lead to back pain.)



a.

- Lie on your back with both knees bent and both feet flat on the floor.
- Tuck in your chin.
- Stretch both hands towards your knees.
- Push the lower part or small of your back onto the floor.
- Raise your head and shoulders as far forward as you can.
- Do not strain yourself.
- Relax.
- Repeat the exercise.



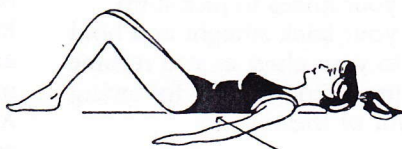
b.

To vary this exercise, try doing exercise 3a. with your hands reaching to opposite sides. For example, right hand to left knee, then left hand to right knee, relaxing between and then repeating.

You should never overdo any exercise, and if you encounter any problems, stop and rest. Check with your doctor if any discomfort persists. Practice these exercises to help you get started towards feeling better after your pregnancy. Eat a sensible, well-balanced diet and rest when you can. Take care of yourself and you will find you will be able to do more as each day progresses.

4. Pelvic Tilt

This exercise will help to flatten your stomach and strengthen your abdominal wall. The pelvic tilt is an important exercise which should be done throughout your life. It also helps to improve your posture. This exercise can be done sitting or standing as well.



- Lie on your back with your knees bent and both feet flat on the floor.
 - Tighten the muscles in your abdomen and buttocks. As you do this, you will feel the small of your back press onto the floor. Do not push with your feet.
 - Hold for two seconds, relax and repeat.
 - If you place your hand under the small of your back you should be able to feel the pressure as you contract your muscles and relax.
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- When sitting in a chair, sit straight and press the small of your back into the back of the chair.
 - Hold for two seconds, relax and repeat.
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- When in a standing position, place your feet about four inches from the wall. Press the small of your back into the wall.
 - Hold for two seconds, relax and repeat.

5. Kegal Exercise

This exercise will help to tone your perineal and vaginal muscles for uterine support and bladder control.

- Lie flat on your back, keeping your legs straight with your ankles crossed.
- Tighten the muscles in your vagina and anus.
- Hold for three seconds and relax. (You will feel as if you are trying to stop and start urinating when you contract these pelvis muscles.)
- Repeat five times.
- Practice this while sitting or standing a few times a day.
- Eventually, you will be able to do this exercise in any position, at any time.

6. Pectoral Muscles

The following will help to strengthen the pectoral muscles which support your breasts.



- Sit, or stand straight, with your arms at shoulder height or lie on your back if you prefer.
- Bend your elbows and press your palms together for five seconds in front of your chest.
- Relax and repeat.