

# POSTPARTUM EXERCISES

The following exercises can be started as soon as your caregiver gives you the go-ahead to embark on a postpartum exercise regime-typically within a day or two of an uncomplicated vaginal delivery, but if you've experienced a Caesarean delivery or a particularly difficult vaginal delivery, your doctor or midwife will likely want you to wait a little longer than that.

## Abdominal Tightening

**Position:** Standing or lying on your back

**What to do:** Inhale slowly and exhale slowly while contracting your abdominal muscles to a count of 10. Then relax your muscles. Repeat three times initially, but progress to up to five or ten repetitions as your abdominal muscles become stronger. You should also increase the number of sets of abdominal exercises you do from three sets to five sets to ten sets over time.

## Head Lift

**Position:** Lying on your back with your knees bent

**What to do:** Inhale. Then, while exhaling, lift your head, chin to chest, and look at your thighs. Hold this position to a count of three and then relax. You should feel this exercise in your abdomen and pelvic floor. Repeat this exercise several times. After a few weeks, you can start lifting your shoulders off the ground, too. You should aim to do five to ten sets of head lifts daily.

## Pelvic Tilt

**Position:** Lying on your back in bed with your knees bent and feet flat

**What to do:** Inhale and exhale, flattening your lower back into the bed and contracting your abdominal muscles. Hold the contracted muscle position to a count of three and then release. Start with five repetitions and work up to ten repetitions daily.

## Kegel Exercises

**Position:** Sitting or standing

**What to do:** Tighten the muscles of the perineal area as if you were trying to stop the flow of urine, and then relax those muscles. Inhale, tighten for a count of five, exhale, and



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relax. Aim to do the exercise five times an hour for the first few days after the delivery, gradually increasing to 10 repetitions of 10 seconds each. Caution: Do not do your Kegels when you're urinating because this will increase your chances of developing a urinary tract infection.

## **Pull-ins (for diastasis recti)**

**Position:** Lying on your back in bed with your head on a pillow and your knees bent and feet flat

**What to do:** Place your hands on your stomach on either side of your belly button. Gently pull your belly button toward your spine. Hold this position for 10 seconds and then slowly release. Repeat 10 to 20 times.

*Don't allow yourself to get into a fitness rut. It's easy to allow boredom to sabotage your workout program. Either rotate fitness activities on a regular basis or find a workout buddy who can help you stay motivated. Your body will thank you for it!*

