

POST-PARTUM HEALTH: YOUR BODY AFTER BABY

What is normal and what is not after having your baby? How do you know if you need help?

Now you are postpartum. This brochure explains what to expect from your body after giving birth and what to do if things don't go as expected. If you had a vaginal or a caesarean birth, your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles have been stretched and possibly damaged and it is essential to get them working well again. While your goal may be to lose your baby fat and restore your figure, how you do this is important since some kinds of exercise can create back pain, difficulty controlling urine or stool or dropping of the uterus and other pelvic organs. Knowing when and how to begin is important. Jumping right into an exercise program after delivery isn't ideal for everyone!

What is normal?

0-8 Weeks after delivery

- You may feel like your bottom is falling out and not know how you should be standing or sitting.
- You may experience pain in your back, hips or pubic area.
- You may have difficulty controlling urine, gas or stool.
- Your neck, arms, back and hips may be sore as you adjust to lifting and feeding your baby.

This is an important stage of healing, allow yourself time to adjust and take the time to listen to your body!

8+ Weeks after delivery

- Your bleeding should have stopped and any incisions/tears should have healed; consult your doctor if you have concerns.
- You should be pain free.
- You should have control over your bladder and bowel movements.
- You may now begin to increase your activity level and consider returning to your exercise class/practice but before you do, go through the following checklist of 'not normal' findings to ensure you are ready.

What is not normal?

- Ongoing back, pelvis, groin or abdominal pain.
- Leaking urine, gas or stool with laughing, coughing, jumping, sneezing, lifting, walking, running, etc.
- Leaking urine or stool when you feel a strong urge to go.
- Pressure or bulging in your vagina or rectum.
- ***Bulging of your abdomen during ANY exercise. See the details in this brochure on two tests to learn how to check for this.***
- Difficulty doing any of your everyday activities because of pain, leakage, pressure or any other symptom that concerns you.

Self-Check: Are you ready to exercise?

Curl up test

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Slowly lift your head and shoulders up off the floor keeping your chin tucked in. (See photo A)

During each test, check for the following:

- Do you have back or pubic pain with these tests?
- Try to feel the borders of the (rectus abdominus) muscles along the middle of your tummy. Is there a 'soft' gap or separation of these muscles (diastasis)? (See photo B)
- Do you see any bulging or doming of your abdomen?
- Feel your pelvic floor (at the opening of your vagina). Is there descent or bulging out?



Photo A

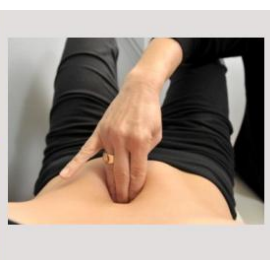


Photo B

If any of the above occurs, see a physiotherapist for a complete assessment of your abdominal and/or pelvic floor muscles before beginning to exercise. Call 6737 3406 to book for a consultation with our physiotherapists!