



Exercise After Pregnancy

**Please speak with your physician about these recommendations before implementing*

Starting an exercise routine after having a baby is important for long term health, but there's a few things to consider before tying up your sneakers and getting started.

BODY CHANGES & RESPONSES TO EXERCISE

- Physical changes of pregnancy including increased joint range of motion, and higher heart rate at rest and during exercise, will continue 4-6 weeks into postpartum.¹
- Pregnancy causes your back muscles to tighten and stomach muscles to stretch. The muscles and joints in your pelvis may also become weaker and more flexible.⁶
- You may experience diastasis recti (a separation in the center of your stomach muscles) during pregnancy. This may take up to 8 weeks to close.⁶ Have your healthcare provider check for this condition, as this may affect the types of exercises you can do.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE AFTER PREGNANCY

- Improved abdominal toning and strength
- Improved endurance
- Decreased risk of DVT (deep vein thrombosis), (i.e. blood clots)
- Weight loss
- Improved mood, energy, and sleep

SAFETY TIPS

- It is safe to return to exercise if delivery was uncomplicated, but ask your doctor before resuming exercise.¹ Generally, women can return to lower-impact exercise in 1-2 weeks following vaginal birth and 3-4 weeks after a c-section. Higher-impact exercises such as running may require waiting longer (about 6 weeks).⁵
- Start slowly with a few strengthening exercises for your core muscles (including Kegel exercises and pelvic tilts) for about 10 minutes of physical activity. Gradually add in more exercise minutes and intensity when you feel ready.
- Stop exercising if you feel any pain. Watch for increased vaginal bleeding – this may be a sign that you're returning to exercise too quickly or vigorously. You may need to see your doctor or a physical therapist that is certified in pelvic floor rehabilitation.
- Focus on form when you return to exercise. The body changes that occur during pregnancy may cause your body to establish new (and possibly risky) movement patterns to compensate.
- If you experience diastasis recti, see a physical therapist to make a recovery plan. Avoid rotating your spine or flexing and extending your core muscles too much.

TIPS FOR EXERCISE AFTER PREGNANCY

- Unless not recommended by your doctor, aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity spread across at least 3 days or more per week.³
- Include strength training exercises at least 2 days per week.
- If breastfeeding, feed baby prior to physical activity to avoid discomfort or engorgement.¹ Higher intensity exercise may cause lactic acid buildup in milk, which some babies may not like, so pumping or feeding before your workout can prevent this.
- Be sure to drink water before, during, and after your workout. Especially if breastfeeding!
- Include a 5 - 10 minute warm up and cool down to prepare your body for exercise and stretch your muscles.
- Wear a supportive bra and breathable clothing.
- Try walking with your baby in a stroller, taking an exercise class with a group, or workout videos at home.

The information contained here within is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor, go to the emergency department, or call 911 immediately. GemCare Wellness (GCW) does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or other information that may be mentioned here within. Reliance on any information provided by GCW, GCW employees, contracted writers, or medical professionals presenting content for publication here within is solely at your own risk.

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