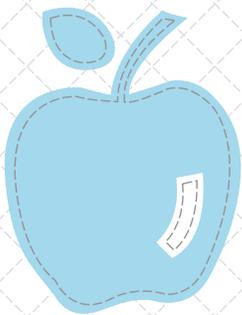
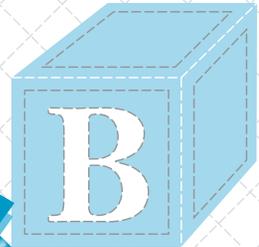
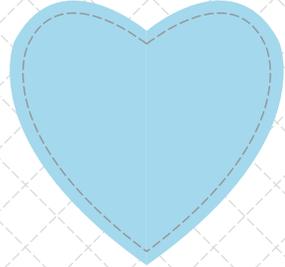
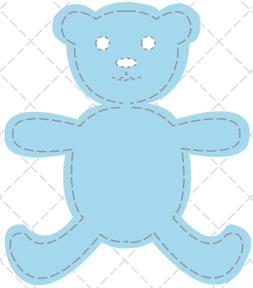


*Healthy Activity*



A NEW LIFE



# *Active Living and Pregnancy*

Active living offers something for everyone.

Active living means that you make some kind of physical activity a part of your daily life. It means doing things that are fun, healthy, and make you feel good. What you decide to do depends on your life and your body.

Active living can help you to:

- Reduce stress. Being active helps your body and mind relax.
- Stay comfortable. Being active can prevent backache and constipation.
- Manage your weight during pregnancy.
- Keep or improve your level of fitness. When you are fit, labour and delivery are not as hard. It will also be easier for you to get your muscle tone, strength, and figure back after your baby is born.
- Have more energy. Being active makes you feel more alive.

Unless you have medical reasons for not being active, you should make exercise and physical activity part of your life. It will help you feel and look better when you are pregnant, and after the baby is born.

This section offers a safe program to help you exercise your whole body within your own limits.

If you already have an active life, ask your health care provider, a physiotherapist or a fitness instructor for advice about exercise and pregnancy.

If you have not been doing regular physical activity, talk to your health care provider, a physiotherapist, or fitness a instructor before you begin. Then start slowly and increase in a way that suits you.

# Comfort Every Day

As your size and shape change during pregnancy, you may find that even standing and sitting seem awkward.

You can adjust your movements to make the everyday activities safe and comfortable.

## Stand Tall: Posture during Pregnancy

**G**ood posture is the key to comfort when you are pregnant. By standing correctly, you can carry the weight without hurting your back or your stomach (abdominal) muscles.

### Check Your Posture

#### Here's what you can do:



Tuck your chin in. Make your neck longer. Think about being taller.

Roll shoulders back. Lift up your rib cage. Relax your arms at the sides of your body. Relax your shoulders.

Tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles. Make your lower back flat. Tuck your buttocks under.

Relax your knees.

Balance your weight on the center of each foot.

#### Try to avoid a posture where:



Your neck sags. Chin juts forward. Body slumps.

Your shoulders slouch. Rib cage is cramped. Arms turn in.

Your stomach (abdominal) muscles are loose. Lower back is hollow. Hips and pelvis tip forward.

Your knees are stiff and locked.

Your weight is on the inner edges of each foot.

### **Good posture when you walk**

Keep your back straight and your head up. Think about having a string tied to the top of your head, pulling your head up and making your spine straighter.

### **Tips for standing tall**

If you must stand for a long time, raise one foot on a stool or the rung of a chair. This will give your back some relief.

When using a broom or a vacuum, stand with one foot forward and knees bent. This makes it easy for you to shift your weight and turn.



### **Looking after your back every day**

Taking care of your back can be something you do every day, now and after your baby is born.

### **Ironing**

When you iron, rest one foot on a small stool.

### **Laundry**

Try not to bend and twist when you move clothes from a washing machine with a top lid into a dryer that has a front door. Instead, put the clothes on top of the dryer and then move them into the dryer.

When you hang clothes on a line, put the laundry basket at the same level as your waist, not on the floor.

### **Making Beds**

Bend your knees, or place one knee on the bed.

### **Carrying Groceries**

Balance the load by carrying the same weight in each hand. Hold heavy bags close to your body. Support heavy bags by bending your arms.

When you take groceries from the trunk of the car, put one foot or knee on the bumper.



### Vacuuuming

Balance yourself with one foot in front of the other. Keep your knees bent a bit and shift your weight from your back foot to your front foot. Try to maintain a pelvic tilt so you will not hurt your back.

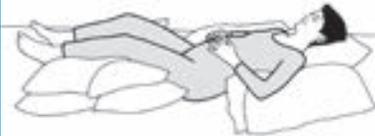
Get down on your knees to reach under furniture.

### Sleeping

Your mattress should be firm. Sleep in a way that does not put strain on your neck and back.

- If you sleep on your side, bend your knees and put a pillow between your legs.
- If you sleep on your back, put a pillow under your knees. Do not use this position later in pregnancy because the weight of the baby will put pressure on one of your main blood vessels.

Avoid lying on your stomach. This puts too much stress on your neck and back.



### Getting Up (from the floor or out of bed)

As your baby grows during pregnancy, you may find it hard to change position. For example, it may be a challenge to get out of bed or to get up off the floor if you have been doing exercises. Try to move slowly. Always be careful when you change position. This will help to prevent muscle strain and dizziness.

### To get up from the floor:

- Bend your knees.
- Push your feet into the floor.
- Lift your buttocks a bit and roll to one side.
- Use your arms to slowly push up to a sitting position.
- Roll onto your knees.
- Move one knee forward placing your foot flat on the floor.
- Straighten your back.
- Place your hands on the bent knee for support.
- Stand, using your leg muscles to push yourself up.



### To get out of bed:

- Move close to the edge of the bed.
- Bend your knees and roll to one side.
- Use your arms to slowly push up to a sitting position.
- Swing your legs over the side of the bed.
- Rest for a moment. Take a couple of breaths.
- Tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles and stand up slowly.



### Lifting

To lift with ease, bend your knees.

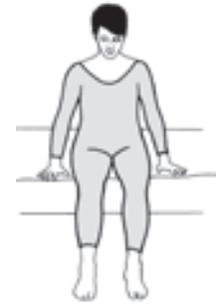
Try to avoid heavy lifting when you are pregnant. Let someone else take out the garbage and carry the groceries.

If you have a toddler or small child, it may be impossible to avoid lifting. To make it easy and safe, instead of lifting a toddler from the floor, help her to climb onto a sofa or a stool and lift her from there. Or sit on a sofa or chair and let her climb onto your lap.

Learning how to lift the right way can save you a lot of back pain, now and after your baby is born. The key is to lift with your leg muscles, not your back. Never bend from the waist. Bend your knees and lift with your legs. You should also try to bring the load as close to your body as you can, before you lift.

When you must lift something, here's how to do it:

- Stand with your feet apart
- Tuck in your buttocks and tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles
- Bend your knees
- Pull the object close to your body
- Lift with your legs



## Sitting (and getting up again)



### Good Sitting Posture

- Sit up straight, with your back and the upper part of your buttocks resting against the back of the chair. Do not sit on the edge of a chair and slump against the back.
- Your feet should be out in front of you. They can be flat on the floor or on a stool. If you sit with your legs crossed, you are blocking the blood flow to your legs.
- Use a stool to raise your legs and feet when you are sitting. This is a good time to do foot and ankle exercises to improve blood circulation. Move your ankle around in circles. Stretch each foot up and down.
- Use little pillows to support your neck and lower back.

### To Sit Down

- Tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles by pulling them in and up. Tuck your buttocks under.
- Use your leg muscles to lower yourself into the chair. Hold the armrests if you need support.
- Slide back into the chair.

### To Stand Up

- Slide forward to the front of the chair.
- Stay upright. Do not lean forward.
- Tighten your buttocks and use your legs to raise your body.
- Hold the armrests for balance.

### Choose a chair or rocker that makes good sitting posture easy.

- **The seat** should be high enough so that your feet are flat on the floor. It should be deep enough to support the length of your thigh, but shallow enough to let your back and the upper part of your buttocks rest against the back of the chair.
- **The back** should be high enough to support your shoulders. It's even better if it can support your head.
- **The armrests** should be at a height that allows your arms to be comfortable when you are sitting in the chair.

If you can't find the perfect chair, you can make any chair more comfortable by using pillows, a foot rest, or a footstool for support.

# Safe and Comfortable Activity

Safety and comfort are important no matter what kind of exercise or activity you do.

By being careful, you can still do most of the things you enjoy.

Dress in loose, lightweight clothing.

## Safe and Unsafe Activities during Pregnancy

These are Safe and Fun	Be Very Careful with These	Avoid These — Not Safe during Pregnancy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Aquafit (exercise in a swimming pool)</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Stationary bike</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing on flat ground</li> <li>• Snowshoeing</li> <li>• Low-impact aerobic classes</li> <li>• Prenatal exercise classes with trained teachers</li> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Tai chi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tennis and other racquet sports.</i> Decrease these sports. Stop after your 6th month.</li> <li>• <i>Golf.</i> Adjust your swing. Do not twist or jerk.</li> <li>• <i>Bowling.</i> Do not bend too far forward or lose your balance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips to help you stay comfortable and active</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Weight training.</i> Do not lift weights while lying on your back. Use low weights and high repetitions. Lessen the weight as you become bigger. Use weight machines. Avoid free weights. Do not hold your breath. Always breathe out when you are lifting.</li> <li>• <i>Running (high impact).</i> If you are not a regular runner, do not start to run or jog when you are pregnant. If you already run or jog, talk to your doctor about running during pregnancy. Listen to your body, and your doctor, when you run during the last three months of pregnancy. When you are running:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Keep your feet wide apart.</li> <li>– Keep your feet close to the ground. Do not bounce or run on uneven surfaces.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If you have any pain, stop and find a new activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downhill skiing</li> <li>• Contact sports such as basketball, volleyball, hockey</li> <li>• Scuba diving</li> <li>• Horseback riding, especially jumping</li> <li>• Heavy weightlifting</li> <li>• Softball or baseball</li> <li>• All terrain vehicle (ATV)</li> </ul>

***How To Stay  
Comfortable  
When You  
Are Active***

Dress in layers so you can take clothes off as you get warm.

Wear a bra with good support and non-elastic straps.

Wear shoes with good heel and arch support.

Go to the bathroom before you begin to exercise.

Review the Guidelines for Healthy Activity on page 122.



# Program for an Active Pregnancy

Prenatal activity makes you stronger. It also helps your body to stretch and relax. Women who are active have healthy pregnancies and births, and a quick recovery after the birth. Always plan to begin and end exercises with a few easy stretches, then:

- Warm-up
- Exercise
- Cool-down

You can also do these exercises after your baby is born. They will help your body get back to normal and will give you the energy you need to enjoy your new baby.

It's a good idea to exercise as often as you can. Once a day is great! Find a friend, get the little ones to 'help' you, or exercise alone. You'll start to feel good sooner than you think.



## Ease into exercise

- Start by doing each exercise 3 to 5 times. Build up to 5 to 10 times each.
- Begin and end your program with a few easy stretches.
- Take a few deep breaths and relax between exercises.
- Avoid high-bounce exercises. No-bounce is much better.
- Keep the water temperature in pools, whirlpools, and hot tubs warm (26 °C to 28°C) (no warmer than your skin temperature). Avoid saunas and steam rooms.

## Listen to your body

- Drink plenty of water while exercising.
- Do not get too hot or too tired.
- Rest when you need to.
- Breathe normally. Do not hold your breath.
- If you have any pain, stop the exercise and check with your health care provider.

*Staying Safe  
and Active*

### **Pace yourself**

- Avoid too much exercise during the first three months.
- If you were not active before you became pregnant, increase your level slowly.
- You should be able to talk while you are doing any exercise. If you can't talk with comfort, you are exercising too hard.
- If you have shortness of breath, slow down or stop the activity.
- Drink plenty of water during cardiovascular exercise. When your body temperature rises, so does the temperature in your uterus. Drinking extra water will keep your whole body at a good temperature.

### **WARNING:**

After cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise, do not lie flat on your back or on your right side until your body has cooled down.

- You may have to change how active you are as you get bigger.
- From the fourth month on, exercise standing, sitting or lying on your side. Try not to be flat on your back for more than five minutes. The baby's weight can press on your blood vessels and reduce blood circulation to you and your baby.

### **Stop exercising and talk with your health care provider if you have:**

- Any bleeding or a gush of water from your vagina.
- Many contractions after exercising. It is normal to feel a bit of tightness (contraction) in your uterus after exercise. But if the contractions keep coming, talk to your health care provider right away.
- Persistent severe headaches or blurred vision.
- Sudden swelling of the ankles, feet, calves, or face.
- An infection.
- Severe nausea or vomiting.
- A decrease in your baby's movement.
- Unexplained pain in your abdomen.

## Exercises

**T**his group of exercises will help your body adjust to pregnancy and get ready for childbirth.

When you are doing any exercise, do not lie on your back for more than 5 minutes unless you have pillows under your head and shoulders.

### Remember

- Start by doing each exercise 3 to 5 times. Over time, you can increase to 5 or 10 times.
- Breathe normally. Never hold your breath.
- Stretch slowly and avoid bouncing.

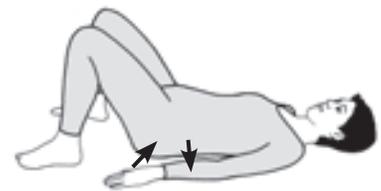
### 1. Pelvic Tilt

What does this do? It helps prevent backache and makes your back and stomach (abdominal) muscles stronger. Here's how to do it:

- Lie on your back, with knees bent, feet flat on the floor.
- Tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles.
- Tighten your buttocks and press your lower back into the floor.
- Hold for a few seconds. Breathe normally.
- Slowly relax.

Pregnancy puts a great strain on your abdomen. The next three exercises will help to make your stomach (abdominal) muscles stronger. This will help you when you are pregnant and when you are giving birth to your baby.

Before you do any abdominal exercise, you need to know whether your stomach (abdominal) muscles might be separated. This happens to about one out of three pregnant women. Ask a friend, your partner, health care provider, or teacher in a prenatal class to help you check for this.



### Here's how to check:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor.
- Tuck your chin in. Slowly raise your head and shoulders until you can see your abdomen.
- If you have muscle separation, you will see a bulge just above or below your belly button. If you are not sure what you see, feel the centre of your abdomen. If you can feel a soft place between two bands of firmer muscle, then you have a separation.



*Here's what to do if you have an abdominal muscle separation:*

If you have a separation, you need to support your abdomen while doing exercises. You can do this by:

- 1) Lacing your fingers together across your abdomen, or
- 2) Crossing your arms and putting a hand on either side of your abdomen.

There is no agreement about whether women should stop abdominal exercises if they have muscle separation. You can do the pelvic tilt and pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises (described on page 119).

For the next two exercises, later in pregnancy, you may want to put pillows under your upper back, so you are lying on a slant. This lets you do abdominal exercises and place less strain on your trunk.

## 2. Curl-ups

What does this do? It strengthens your stomach (abdominal) muscles. If you have a separation, support your abdomen with your hands. Here's how to do it:

- Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor, arms across your abdomen.
- Tighten your abdomen and buttocks. (This is the pelvic tilt. Hold these muscles firm while doing this exercise.)
- Tuck in your chin.
- Lift up your head and shoulders while breathing out.
- Slowly lower your shoulders and head to the floor.
- Relax.
- Repeat.



### 3. Diagonal Curl-ups

What does this do? It strengthens your muscles along the side of your abdomen. Here's how to do it:

**NOTE:** Do not do this exercise if you have an abdominal muscle separation.

- Lie down, knees bent, feet flat on the floor.
- Tighten your abdomen and buttocks. (This is the pelvic tilt. Hold these muscles firm while doing this exercise.)
- Tuck in your chin.
- Lift your head and shoulders.
- Reach your arms across your body toward one knee.
- Curl up as far as you can, breathing out. Hold the pose while you count to 5. Breathe normally.
- Slowly lower your shoulders and head to the floor.
- Relax.
- Repeat, going from side to side.

**The next two exercises (#4 and #5)** will help make your pelvic floor muscles stronger. What are pelvic floor muscles? They are the muscles that go from your pubic bone in front to your tailbone in the back.

When you are pregnant, these pelvic floor muscles must be strong enough to support your uterus. During childbirth you need to be able to control these muscles, so you can relax them when the baby is being born.

Doing this exercise often will keep your pelvic floor muscles strong. This kind of exercise is sometimes called Kegel exercise or hidden exercise. You can do this any time — when you brush your teeth, when you are watching TV, when you are standing in line at the store. In fact, you can do these exercises when you are sitting, lying, or standing.

Doing 5 contractions, 10 times a day is not hard. You will benefit now and for the rest of your life.

### 4. Basic Pelvic Floor Exercise (Kegel exercise).

- You can be in any position: lying, sitting, standing, or on your hands and knees.
- Tighten the muscles around your bladder, vagina and rectum. Feel them pulling up inside.
- Hold for a count of five.
- Relax and repeat.



### 5. The Elevator

- You can be sitting, standing, or lying down. When you are learning this exercise, it is best to lie down.
- Imagine that you are an elevator.
- Slowly tighten your pelvic floor muscles, pulling them tighter and tighter at each floor.
  - First floor, make them tight.
  - Second floor, a bit tighter.
  - Third floor, tighter.
  - Fourth floor, hold for a few seconds.
- Breathe normally.
- Now, come back down the elevator.
  - Third floor, release a bit.
  - Second floor, release a bit more.
  - First floor, relax.
- Repeat.



### 6. Pelvic Rock

What does this do? This exercise can help you reduce lower back pain. Here's how to do it:

- Kneel on your hands and knees.
- Hold your back flat. Do not arch your back or let it go hollow. Keep your head level with your back.
- Tighten your stomach (abdominal) muscles pulling in and up.
- Tuck in your buttocks.
- Slowly relax your abdomen and buttocks. Keep your back flat. Don't let it sag.
- Repeat slowly.



**M**ost exercises are safe when you are pregnant. But there are a few you should avoid because they put too much strain on your back and abdomen, or may throw you off balance.

## *Exercises to Avoid*

### **To be safe, avoid:**

- Trunk rotations with straight legs in a standing position
- Double straight-leg raises while lying on your back
- Straight leg sit-ups
- Exercises where you lift your lower back off the floor
- Shoulder stand with bicycling
- Deep knee bends — up and down
- Touching your toes from a standing position without bending your knees

If you do not know whether an exercise is safe, check with your health care provider or a physiotherapist.

# Active Living

---

As well as doing a daily exercise program, walking, riding a bike and swimming are part of an active life.

If you were active before you got pregnant, try to stay active during your pregnancy. Be sure to read the section that tells you what is safe and unsafe during pregnancy.

If you have not been physically active before, you can start with walking, swimming and special prenatal exercise classes.

Common sense is important. Listen to your body. If you have pain, are tired or have shortness of breath, slow down or change to a different activity.

Find an activity you enjoy and have fun!

## *Guidelines for Healthy Activity*

**F**ollow the Guidelines for Staying Comfortable and Active on page 114.

Choose an activity that you enjoy and try to do it for 10 to 15 minutes at a time, 3 - 4 times a week.

Warm up or stretch before your activity. Begin slowly.

Cool down or stretch after your activity. Gradually slow down. Do not stop suddenly.

### **Use the “talk test.”**

If you are moving at the right pace, you should be able to talk during your activity. If you can't talk, you are doing too much. Slow down!

### **Don't forget to eat and drink.**

Have a small snack, like whole wheat bread or a muffin about one hour or 90 minutes before you start. This will give you energy and avoid using up food your baby needs.

If the weather or the room is hot, drink small amounts of water every 5 minutes while you're active.

Avoid activities that involve

- Jumping
- Twisting
- Rapid jerking
- Sprinting
- Quick starts

**W**alking is easy and it is one of the best things you can do when you are pregnant. It is safe and natural, and there is almost no risk that you will hurt yourself.

Brisk walking is a healthy thing to do. More than half of your body's muscles are used when you walk. It trains your heart, lungs, and muscles to work better.

Regular, brisk walking can reduce blood pressure, improve digestion, and help prevent constipation. It also helps your body use more calories. If you eat healthy food, walking will help you maintain a healthy weight and feel good about your body.

Walking has other benefits as well.

- Walking makes your mind feel fresh. You will have more energy and feel less tired.
- Walking takes away stress and tension.

And whether you do it alone, with friends or with family, walking is fun!

## *Walking*

# Learning to Relax

When you relax, you let go of tension in your body (muscles) and in your mind.

Learning to relax:

- Helps you save energy
- Makes you feel good
- Helps make your baby's birth easy

Learning to relax is one of the best ways to have a comfortable labour.

There are many ways to relax. If you have found something that helps you to relax, use it.

When you relax:

- Make sure all parts of your body have support and feel comfortable
- Let go of all muscle tension
- Clear your mind
- Breathe slowly and take in the same amount of air as you give out.

Learning to relax is a life skill. If you learn it now, you will have it for the rest of your life.

## Finding Positions To Help You Relax

**Y**ou never know what will feel good during labour. We suggest you learn to relax in different positions.

There is only one position to avoid when you relax. Do not lie flat on your back. This is because the weight of your uterus presses on your blood vessels and can reduce blood flow to you and your baby.

Many women enjoy these positions when they relax:



**Side lying**, with one pillow under your head and another pillow between your knees. Both knees should be bent a bit. Lying on your left side helps improve blood circulation to you and your baby.



**Side lying** with one arm behind. One pillow supports your head and shoulders. Put another pillow under your upper leg. Lying on your left side helps improve your blood circulation.



**Back lying**, with at least two pillows under your head and shoulders and another pillow under your knees. Do not lie this way later in pregnancy, because the weight of the baby will put pressure on one of your main blood vessels.

## When You Practise Relaxation

It can be helpful for your labour partner to check your muscles for tension while you are learning to relax. They can gently touch or lift parts of your body. For example if your arm or leg is limp and relaxed, your partner puts it gently back on the pillow. If your arm or leg feels tense, your partner strokes or touches it gently until it relaxes. A warm, soft touch can help you relax more deeply. Many people are able to 'let go' of their muscles when they feel a light touch.

Breathe slowly and deeply while you learn to relax.

As you tighten your muscles, do so just enough so that you can feel them.  
As you relax, think about letting go of tension in your muscles.

Your labour partner may want to use a calm, soothing voice to help you relax. This will help you learn how to relax, and you may find that just the tone of voice will help you relax. This can make you feel safe and calm when you are trying to relax during labour. We suggest that your partner read "Relaxing Step by Step" to you while you learn to relax.

**T**o learn to relax, you need to feel and then release muscle tension. You do this by making your muscles tight and then letting them get loose, one by one. Tighten as you breathe in. Let go as you breathe out.

You may want to start at your toes and move up to your face. You can also start with your face and move down to your toes. Try it both ways to see what you like better.

Find a comfortable position, making sure all parts of your body have support.

- Breathe in and tighten your ankles and pull your feet back toward your body.  
Breathe out, letting go.
- Breathe in and tighten your legs.  
Breathe out, letting go.
- Breathe in and tighten your buttocks and pelvic floor muscles.  
Breathe out, letting go.
- Breathe in and curl your hands into a fist or straighten your fingers.  
Breathe out, letting go.
- Breathe in and bend your wrists.  
Breathe out, letting go.
- Breathe in and pull your shoulder blades together.  
Breathe out, letting go.

## Relaxing Step by Step

- Breathe in and wrinkle your face so it is as small and tight as it can be. Breathe out, letting go.
- Continue to breathe slowly, taking in the same amount of air when you inhale and letting out the same amount when you exhale... in and out, in and out, in and out ...
- Let your whole body go ... close your eyes ... rest. Breathe in and out, in and out.
- As you relax more deeply, your body will feel heavy, as if it is sinking into the floor. Let it go. Breathe in and out, in and out.
- Continue to breathe in and out, in and out, in and out. Let the sound and feeling of your breath keep your mind clear and calm.
- You may fall asleep. Let yourself go. Breathe in and out, in and out, in and out.
- When you are ready to move, do it slowly. Make fists with your hands and stretch the fingers out. Make circles with your feet and ankles. Move your legs. Sit up slowly. Rest for a moment, and then stand up.



# *After The Baby Comes: A Postnatal Program*

---

Doing exercises after the baby is born is important. They will help your body adjust and go back to the way it was before you were pregnant. The time after the baby is born is called the “postnatal” time. Postnatal exercises can:

- Improve your blood circulation
- Help your body heal faster
- Restore muscle strength
- Build up your energy
- Help your bowels and bladder return to normal
- Help you feel better and more relaxed

You can start doing postnatal exercises as soon as your baby is born. See Section 7 - Healthy Birthing, for postnatal exercises you can do in hospital.

Once you return home, do your prenatal exercises again. Start slowly. Your strength will come back with time.

Healthy activity is important after the baby is born. You can run or swim. Make sure that your stitches have healed and all bleeding has stopped. Do not try to do too much. Listen to your body. If you have any pain or more bleeding, call your health care provider for advice.

Check with your health care provider before you begin a sport or activity you used to do. Within 8 weeks you should be able to do all your favourite activities.

## Postnatal Program

**I**n the first week home:

### Warm-up first

Do some gentle warm-up and stretching exercises that make you feel comfortable.

### Strengthening Exercises

- Pelvic Tilts
- Pelvic Floor Exercises
- Curl-ups\*
- Diagonal Curl-ups\*

### Cool-down

### Relaxation

- Lie on your back with your knees bent. Relax your arms at your sides.
- Straighten one leg, pressing your knee into the floor and pointing toes toward your head.
- Press your lower back into the floor.
- Pull your shoulder blades together.
- Tuck your chin in and push your head into the floor.
- Stretch your arms down.
- Hold the pose while you count to 10.
- Relax slowly and completely. Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Repeat, using your other leg.

In your second week at home add the other stretching and strength exercises from your prenatal list of exercises.

**\* If you had a cesarean birth, read the next section *before you do these exercises.***

## After a Cesarean Birth

**Y**ou can — and should — begin postnatal exercises while you are still in hospital. Section 7 - Healthy Birthing, has breathing and other exercises that will help.

When you go home, you can follow the same postnatal program as other mothers, with only one change. Do not do the abdominal exercises (Curl-ups, and Diagonal Curl-ups) until 3 to 6 weeks after your baby is born.

**T**o make sure you do not hurt your back, keep your good posture and be careful when lifting.

**Remember: to lift with ease, bend your knees.**

When you pick up your baby or toddler, follow the advice on safe lifting in the section called Comfort Every Day. Do not carry a baby or toddler on your hip.

You can also protect your back by making sure your baby's crib mattress is as high as it can be. Lower the side rail when you pick up the baby or change the sheets.

Use a table as high as your waist when you change diapers or give your baby a bath. If you do not have such a table, kneel down to do these things.

The handles on your stroller should be at waist level. Stand up straight and use your arms to push.

Be sure you have good support when you breastfeed or give your baby a bottle.

When you are sitting

- Support your lower back with a pillow
- Support your arms with pillows or chair arms.
- Raise your feet on a small stool.

Breastfeeding when you are lying on your side

- Place a pillow between your legs and behind your lower back.
- Do not twist your back.

When you use an infant carrier such as a Snuggli™, carry the baby above your waist.

When you put the car seat into the car — or take it out — you need to protect your back. You can protect it by resting one knee on the seat or putting one foot on the floor of the car. Turn to face the car seat when you buckle the baby into his seat.

## *Taking Care of Your Back while taking care of your baby*

