

Progressing your exercises after birth

It is important that you are able to do your core abdominal exercises, given to you on the ward before beginning these. If you are unable to do these, you may put too much strain on your back when doing the new exercises. If you are unsure about any exercises, please check with your physiotherapist first.

Exercises from 6 weeks after birth

1. Knee bends

- Start by lying down with your knees bent and feet flat.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Slowly bend one hip and knee up towards your chest.
- Hold for 10 seconds and then slowly bring the leg down so the foot is flat.
- Complete 10 repetitions on each leg; continue to breathe throughout the exercise.

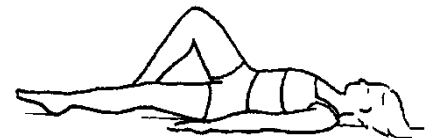


2. Knee fall-outs

- Start by lying down with your knees bent and feet flat.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Slowly let one knee fall out to the side, keeping the opposite leg still.
- Slowly bring the knee back up, keeping the other leg still.
- Complete 10 repetitions on each leg; continue to breathe throughout the exercise.

3. One leg stretch

- Start by lying down with your knees bent and feet flat.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Slowly slide one leg out straight. Make sure you are not arching your back.
- Slowly slide the leg back to its original position, keeping the other leg still.
- Complete 10 repetitions on each leg; continue to breathe throughout the exercise.



Exercises from 12 weeks after birth

4. Sit-ups

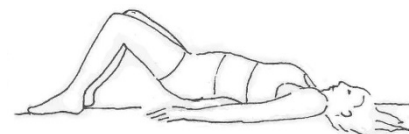
- Start by lying down with your knees bent and feet flat with two pillows under your head and your arms down by your side.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Slowly reach your hands towards your ankles using your abdominal muscles to bring your head off the ground. Hold for 2-4 seconds then lower your head down.
- Your abdomen should stay flat and you should continue to breathe.
- Progress this exercise by removing one pillow and continue as above.
- You should not get any neck pain or abdominal bulging when doing this exercise.

5. Cross abdominal sit-ups

- Start by lying down with your knees bent and feet flat.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Reach your right hand towards your left knee using your abdominal muscles.
- Lower back down and relax. Then repeat on the other side.
- Progress this exercise by holding for 2-4 seconds then lower head down.

6. Bridging

- Start by lying down with knees bent and feet flat.
- Draw in your belly button towards your spine and hold.
- Squeeze your bottom muscles and tuck your bottom under, slowly rolling up into the bridge position.
- Continue to breathe and then slowly roll your back down.
- Progress this exercise by holding the bridge position for 2-4 seconds, but remember to use your abdominals to support you.



The above exercises should not be painful and should not create any doming or bulging in the abdominal area. If you have any concerns, please ring **0118 322 7811** to speak to a maternity / women's health physiotherapist.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Author: Abarna Manoharan (physiotherapist), May 2008

Reviewed: July 2018 M. Wheeler, Sept 2020 (J. Churches/A Manoharan)

Approved: Maternity Information Group & Patient Information Manager, November 2020

Review due: November 2022