

Mommies in Motion

Vaginal Birth

New recommendations suggest that if you were active during pregnancy and had an uncomplicated birth, it is generally safe to resume physical activity a few days after birth.

What Physical Activity Can do for You

- ☀️ Helps burn more calories to maintain a healthy weight
- ☀️ Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression
- ☀️ Improves sleep at night
- ☀️ Gives more energy during the day
- ☀️ Reduces risk for heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain types of cancer

Goal: Experts recommend at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity (aerobic) activity.

How-To's

The following guidelines are for women who have had an uncomplicated delivery. If you had complications, such as 4th degree tearing or excessive blood loss, consult your health care provider before beginning any moderate physical activity.

- ☀️ **Get ready.** Make sure you are wearing comfortable clothes, including a supportive bra.
- ☀️ **Keep it simple.** Begin slowly and increase gradually. Walking, swimming, or riding a stationary bike are good beginning activities.
- ☀️ **Take time** to include a warm up and cool down.
- ☀️ **Target the tummy.** Abdominal exercises can help tone tummy muscles. Losing belly fat takes both aerobic activity and changes in eating.
- ☀️ **Include the baby.** Take your baby for walks in a stroller or baby carrier.
- ☀️ **Do activities with others.** Invite family members or friends to join you or join a postpartum activity class at a local community center, hospital, or fitness club.
- ☀️ **Breathe throughout the activity.**
- ☀️ **Drink plenty of water.**
- ☀️ **Stop if you feel pain** or exhaustion.
- ☀️ **Stop** if you have bright red vaginal bleeding that is heavier than a period, and contact your health care provider.

Activities to try:

- ☀️ Aerobic activities increase heart rate.
 - ☀️ Take walks pushing the stroller
 - ☀️ Do laps in a pool
 - ☀️ Walk up stairs
 - ☀️ Dance to your favorite music
- ☀️ Kegel exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.
 - ☀️ The pelvic floor muscles are those you would use to stop urinating mid-stream. With an empty bladder, tighten these muscles 8-12 times, holding for 6 to 8 seconds each time. Do this twice a day.



Continued on back

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Vaginal Birth - Continued

- ☀ Abdominal/core exercises reduce lower back pain.
- ☀ Always tighten your tummy muscles before lifting your baby or any other weight.
- ☀ *Pelvic tilt* – Lie on your back with your knees bent. Tighten your stomach muscles by flattening your back to the floor while rocking your pelvis up slightly. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat.
- ☀ *Bridge exercise* – Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and your hands at your sides. While tightening the muscles in your bottom, the back of your legs, and in your tummy, raise your hips up toward the ceiling so you form a straight line from your knees to your shoulders. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat.
- ☀ Stretching
 - ☀ Do gentle stretches after exercise. Stretch muscles of legs, arms and shoulders, neck, and back.
- ☀ Muscle conditioning brings back muscle tone.
 - ☀ Lift a light weight or object above you while on your back.
 - ☀ Squat while holding your baby or picking up toys

Physical activity and breastfeeding are good for you and your baby: Physical activity does not affect breast milk supply, your baby's growth, or how your baby takes the milk. Breastfeed or pump before activity to lighten the weight in your breasts.

Cesarean Birth

Recovery from a cesarean (C-section) birth takes longer than after a vaginal birth. The incision heals in about four to six weeks. Ask your health care provider when to begin gentle exercises to speed recovery.

How-To's

- ☀ **Resume other physical activity** when your health care provider says it is alright. These activities will help to restore muscle strength and tone, increase energy and well-being, and reduce constipation.
- ☀ **Lift only the weight of your baby** until your health care provider says you can do more.
- ☀ **Begin slowly** and increase gradually. Walking is a good beginning activity.
- ☀ **Drink plenty of water.**
- ☀ **Follow the suggestions** for physical activity after vaginal delivery when your provider says you are ready.

References

- ☀ Mayo Clinic - www.mayoclinic.com/health/weight-loss-after-pregnancy/PR00147/NSECTIONGROUP=2
- ☀ Mottola M. Exercise in the postpartum period: practical Applications. *Current Sports Medicine Reports*. 2002;1:362

