

ab exercises for postpartum

Ab Exercises for Postpartum: A Comprehensive Guide to Reclaiming Your Core Strength

Author: Dr. Emily Carter, PT, DPT, OCS (Doctor of Physical Therapy, Board-Certified Orthopedic Clinical Specialist, specializing in women's health and postpartum rehabilitation)

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Editor: Sarah Miller, RN, BSN (Registered Nurse with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, extensive experience in maternal-child health).

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Introduction:

The journey of motherhood is transformative, both physically and emotionally. Postpartum recovery is a critical period focused on healing and regaining strength. While many new mothers focus on regaining their pre-pregnancy weight, strengthening the abdominal muscles through targeted ab exercises for postpartum is equally, if not more, important. A strong core is essential for stability, posture, and overall well-being, reducing the risk of back pain, incontinence, and other common postpartum issues. This article provides a comprehensive guide to ab exercises for postpartum, emphasizing safety, proper form, and gradual progression. It's crucial to remember that every woman's recovery is unique, and consulting with a healthcare professional before starting any exercise program is paramount.

Understanding Postpartum Changes:

Pregnancy significantly impacts the abdominal muscles. The uterus expands, stretching the abdominal wall and potentially causing diastasis recti, a separation of the rectus abdominis muscles (the "six-pack" muscles). Hormonal changes also contribute to weakened connective tissue and reduced muscle tone. These changes necessitate a cautious and progressive approach to ab exercises for postpartum. Rushing the process can exacerbate existing issues and delay proper healing.

The Importance of Core Strengthening:

A strong core is the foundation of good posture and physical function. After childbirth, a weakened core can lead to:

Back pain: The weakened abdominal muscles place increased strain on the back.
Pelvic floor dysfunction: Weakened pelvic floor muscles can result in urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, or pelvic organ prolapse.

Diastasis recti: Untreated diastasis recti can lead to persistent abdominal bulging, lower back pain, and reduced core stability.
Poor posture: A weakened core can contribute to poor posture, leading to discomfort and further muscle imbalances.

Safe Ab Exercises for Postpartum: A Phased Approach

Rebuilding core strength after childbirth requires a phased approach, starting with gentle exercises and gradually increasing intensity and difficulty. This approach minimizes risk of injury and promotes optimal healing. The following phases are a general guideline, and individual progress will vary. Always listen to your body and stop if you experience pain.

Phase 1: The Foundation (Weeks 0-6 postpartum)

This phase focuses on gentle exercises that promote healing and improve awareness of the pelvic floor and deep core muscles.

Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels): These are crucial for strengthening the pelvic floor muscles. Focus on slow, controlled contractions and relaxations.
Deep breathing exercises: Diaphragmatic breathing helps engage the deep core muscles and improve posture.
Gentle abdominal bracing: Lightly engage your abdominal muscles as if you're protecting your belly during a sneeze or cough. Hold briefly and release.
Head lifts (modified): Lie on your back with knees bent. Gently lift your head off the ground, engaging your deep core muscles, not just your neck muscles. Lower slowly. Avoid pulling on your neck.

Phase 2: Building Strength (Weeks 6-12 postpartum)

Once your body has begun to heal, you can gradually increase the intensity of your ab exercises for postpartum.

Bird-dog: Start on your hands and knees. Extend one arm forward and the opposite leg backward, maintaining a straight line from head to heel. Hold briefly and return to starting position.
Dead bug: Lie on your back with knees bent and arms extended towards the ceiling. Slowly lower one arm and the opposite leg towards the floor, maintaining core engagement.
Modified planks: Start with a forearm plank, holding for as long as you can comfortably maintain proper form. Gradually progress to a full plank.
Side plank (modified): Lie on your side with your elbow under your shoulder. Lift your hips off the ground, engaging your core and side muscles. Modify by bending your bottom knee for support.

Phase 3: Advanced Core Work (Weeks 12+ postpartum)

Once your core is significantly stronger, you can incorporate more challenging ab exercises for postpartum.

Bicycle crunches (modified): Perform slow, controlled bicycle crunches, focusing on core engagement and avoiding excessive twisting.
Russian twists (modified): Sit with knees bent and feet slightly lifted. Lean back slightly and twist your torso from side to side, engaging your obliques. Avoid momentum.
Flutter kicks: Lie on your back with legs extended and slightly lifted. Alternate lifting your legs in a fluttering motion, maintaining core

engagement.

Plank variations: Incorporate plank variations such as side planks, high planks, and forearm planks.

Addressing Diastasis Recti:

If you suspect you have diastasis recti, it's crucial to consult with a physical therapist specializing in women's health. They can assess the severity of the separation and guide you through specific exercises to address it. Many exercises listed above are beneficial, but specific techniques focusing on deep core engagement are essential for diastasis recti repair. Avoid high-impact exercises and abdominal exercises that increase intra-abdominal pressure until your diastasis recti has healed.

Nutrition and Hydration:

Proper nutrition and hydration are crucial for supporting postpartum recovery and muscle growth. Focus on a balanced diet rich in protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Stay well-hydrated to support optimal bodily function.

Listening to Your Body:

The most important aspect of ab exercises for postpartum is listening to your body. Stop if you experience pain, dizziness, or any other discomfort. Don't compare your progress to others, as every woman's recovery journey is unique. Progress gradually and celebrate your achievements along the way.

Conclusion:

Regaining core strength after childbirth is a crucial aspect of postpartum recovery. By following a phased approach to ab exercises for postpartum and consulting with a healthcare professional, new mothers can safely and effectively rebuild their core strength, improving their overall well-being and reducing the risk of postpartum complications. Remember, patience and consistency are key to achieving your fitness goals.

FAQs

1. When can I start doing ab exercises after childbirth? It's generally recommended to wait at least 6 weeks after vaginal delivery or 8 weeks after a Cesarean section before starting any strenuous abdominal exercises. However, always consult your doctor or physical therapist.
1. What are the signs of diastasis recti? Signs include a bulging abdomen, especially when you cough, sit up, or do abdominal exercises; a feeling of weakness or instability in your core; and a visible separation of the abdominal muscles.

1. Can I still exercise if I have diastasis recti? Yes, but you need to modify your exercises to avoid exacerbating the condition. A physical therapist can help you identify safe and effective exercises.
1. How often should I do ab exercises postpartum? Aim for at least 3-4 sessions per week, with rest days in between.
1. What if I experience pain during postpartum ab exercises? Stop immediately and consult with your healthcare provider or physical therapist. Pain is a sign that you're pushing yourself too hard.
1. Are there any specific exercises I should avoid postpartum? Avoid high-impact exercises, sit-ups, and crunches until your core is stronger and your diastasis recti (if present) has healed.
1. How long will it take to regain my pre-pregnancy abdominal strength? The time it takes varies depending on individual factors, but it can take several months or even longer. Be patient and consistent.
1. Can I combine ab exercises with other postpartum exercises? Yes, you can incorporate ab exercises into a broader postpartum fitness routine, but prioritize proper form and gradual progression.
1. Should I use a postpartum belly band? A postpartum belly band may provide support and comfort, but it's not a substitute for proper core strengthening exercises.

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1. Choosing the Right Postpartum Physical Therapist: Tips for finding a qualified physical therapist specializing in women's health.

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 Becky Choi offers seven powerful secrets that helped her to recover from two incidents of Diastasis Recti after childbirth. You will learn tried and tested methods for post-partum healing of core muscle weakness, abdominal separation and weight loss, so that you can be confident that you can get fit without making your condition worse. In this new post-partum care book for new mothers, you will learn how Becky was able to shed 35 pounds in five months and get a strong core, with no strenuous or lengthy ab workouts.

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 Don't let your pregnancy result in a weak core and unsightly belly bulge! With your new baby at home, it's hard to find time to take care of you. But if you have experienced diastasis recti during pregnancy, the best time to repair it is right now. Mom's Guide to Diastasis Recti offers a realistic

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- Daily rehab routines with stretches and toning activities
- Advanced maintenance programs to keep your tummy tight

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pregnancy, answering such questions as, How does exercise benefit the mother? How does exercise affect growth of the fetus? What is the effect of exercise on milk production? Does exercise limit weight gain during pregnancy? What is the right amount of exercise? What are the dos and don'ts of exercising when pregnant? When should exercise be avoided? How late into pregnancy can you exercise? and What should be the exercise regimen after giving birth? Updated to include the latest scientific information on staying fit during pregnancy and emphasize appropriate exercises, this new edition thoroughly describes the changes that happen to the mother while she's pregnant and how both she and the child can benefit through exercise.

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Mummy Tummy introduces the Tupler Technique, a set of deceptively simple abdominal and breathing exercises that decrease the diastasis and result in a firmer, flatter, and stronger belly. Like Kegels-those all-important and privately-practiced pregnancy exercises-the Tupler Technique can be practiced almost anywhere and at anytime. Including illustrations for a 15 or a 30-minute at-home exercise routine, Lose Your Mummy Tummy ensures: A tighter, flatter stomach A smaller waistline A reduction or elimination of back pain The ability to safely lift your baby and heavy objects More energy Better posture The perfect preparation for your next pregnancy

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fatigue to giving you a welcome head start on getting back into shape after childbirth. Developed by a professional trainer who is also a registered nurse and childbirth educator, the Maternal Fitness program is safe for you and your baby and easy to do. Once learned, it can be incorporated into any workout.

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Cesar Fernandez de las Penas, 2013-01-15 This exciting new publication is the first authoritative resource on the market with an exclusive focus on Trigger Point (TrP) dry needling. It provides a detailed and up-to-date scientific perspective against which TrP dry needling can be best understood. The first section of the book covers important topics such as the current understanding and neurophysiology of the TrP phenomena, safety and hygiene, the effect of needling on fascia and connective tissue, and an account on professional issues surrounding TrP dry needling. The second section includes a detailed and well-illustrated review of deep dry needling techniques of the most common muscles throughout the body. The third section of the book describes several other needling approaches, such as superficial dry needling, dry needling from a Western Acupuncture perspective, intramuscular stimulation, and Fu's subcutaneous needling. Trigger Point Dry Needling brings together authors who are internationally recognized specialists in the field of myofascial pain and dry needling. First book of its kind to include different needling approaches (in the context of evidence) for the management of neuromuscular pain conditions Highlights both current scientific evidence and clinicians' expertise and experience Multi-contributed by a team of top international experts Over 200 illustrations supporting the detailed description of needling techniques

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2011-01-01 The remarkably complex pelvic floor and its disorders comprise one of the most interesting -- and challenging -- areas of physical therapy. And recently, common problems once considered taboo, such as incontinence, have become mainstream issues. More than ever before, a solid understanding of the structure and function of the manifold problems of the pelvic floor is vital to successful treatment. This groundbreaking work brings together an international team of world-renowned experts in the treatment of urinary and fecal incontinence, as well as sexual dysfunction, to provide a comprehensive guide to the structure and function of the muscles of the

pelvic floor. Using concise text and clear illustrations and helpful photographs, the authors present all phenomena associated with pelvic floor dysfunction. The authors begin with a detailed overview of the anatomy and physiology of the pelvic floor, and then discuss all state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment strategies, from biofeedback and manual therapy to the causes of different types of pain and psychosocial problems. Detailed discussions of the specific issues associated with children, women, and men, as well as with rectal and anal dysfunction, follow. With its thorough coverage, this highly practical text is essential reading for all health care professionals who wish to provide their patients suffering from disorders of the pelvic floor with the best care available.

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cycle. She includes a 10-week creative physical activity curriculum for adolescent girls, detailed explanations of contraindications for exercise and conditions requiring assessment and warning signs in pregnancy, plus exercise guidelines for pregnant women. Cowlin also includes insightful ideas for working with pregnant and parenting adolescent girls. She addresses approaches for dealing with physical conditions resulting from pregnancy, birth, and the extended postpartum period; and she offers sample group fitness sessions for midlife women.

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ab exercises for postpartum: Straight A's in Maternal-neonatal Nursing Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2008 This easy-to-read outline review follows the unique two-column Straight A's format that lets students choose how they study to improve test scores and final grades. The interior column outlines key facts for in-depth review; the exterior column lists only the most crucial points for quickest review. Other features include pretest questions at the beginning of each chapter; end-of-chapter NCLEX®-style questions; lists of top items to study before a test; Time-Out for Teaching patient-teaching points; Go with the Flow algorithms; and alerts highlighted in a second color. A bound-in CD-ROM contains hundreds of NCLEX®-style questions—including alternate-item format questions—with answers and rationales.

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ab exercises for postpartum: The First Six Weeks Midwife Cath, 2016-04-27 Everything you need to know about caring for your new baby, from feeding to sleeping and everything in between - every parent's new best friend. 'Cath Curtin is the newborn baby guru! A calming voice, a gentle hand and a wealth of knowledge during one of the most incredible but terrifying times of your life - new parenthood. To have Cath's support after the birth of my first son was invaluable and I don't know how I would have done it without her!' Rebecca Judd Cathryn Curtin has delivered more than 10,000 babies over the last 40 years, so she understands how the first six weeks of a baby's life are vital for establishing habits that help create a healthy, happy routine for your baby and a loving lifelong bond between you and your child. In this practical and easy-to-use guide, Midwife Cath covers all aspects of a newborn's first weeks, from caring for your baby to coping with the sudden emotional and physical changes of new parenthood. By following her brilliant bath, bottle and bed

routine, you'll enjoy a deep sleep for up to five hours in these demanding early weeks while your partner has some precious one-on-one time with your child. These first weeks of a baby's life can be a challenge for any new parent. Midwife Cath's invaluable experience and wisdom will guide you through them as well as help you establish a routine that will ensure a healthier, happier baby and better-rested and more confident parents.

ab exercises for postpartum: Foundations of Maternal-Newborn and Women's Health Nursing - E-Book Sharon Smith Murray, Emily Slone McKinney, 2017-12-28 - NEW! Reorganized content integrates complications into standard family care, includes new sections on obesity, and recommendations for infant safe sleep environment and reductions of SIDS risk. - NEW! Contributing content from known experts in the field of Maternal and Women's health include a former AWHONN president.

ab exercises for postpartum: *The Everything Health Guide To Postpartum Care* Megan Francis, 2007-04-02 After all the anticipation of pregnancy and the joy associated with childbirth, many new mothers often find themselves unprepared - emotionally and physically - for what comes next. If you are: curious of how you'll feel after your baby is delivered, not sure of how to care for your body after a C-section, unsure of how to adjust to motherhood, or suffering from postpartum depression, you're not alone. If you're concerned about post-delivery complications or whether you'll need outside help during this sensitive time, this handy guide answers all of your questions and helps you take those first steps to getting back on track. From getting enough sleep and getting back in shape to answering all of your financial and health-care concerns - The Everything Health Guide to Postpartum Care offers expert, reassuring information on: Your hospital stay and post-delivery complications Sex after delivery Work after birth Breast, skin, and hair care Postpartum depression Written by a health writer and mother of four and reviewed by a certified midwife and registered nurse, The Everything Health Guide to Postpartum Care helps you feel and look your best after delivery.

ab exercises for postpartum: *Diastasis Recti* Katy Bowman, 2016 Your abdominal muscles have many important jobs-they help you do everything from twisting your spine to singing, accommodating pregnancy, and protecting your abdominal organs. They should not be splitting down the middle! In *Diastasis Recti*, biomechanist Katy Bowman explains the larger picture when it comes to DR-including body alignment; frequency of movement; the effects of all-day forces, like intra-abdominal pressure; and why doing just a few focused exercises doesn't often result in long-term success. You must learn a new way to move for an improved set of core muscles. In *Diastasis Recti* you will learn: why it's better to think of a diastasis as a symptom rather than as the problem, how your current movement habits may be worsening your separation, five postural adjustments to make immediately, why mainstream core exercises like crunches and planks can make a diastasis worse, how to sit, stand, and walk for a stronger whole body core, This book's exercise program is designed to be gentle and effective for diastasis recti core weakness, pelvic floor disorders including pelvic organ prolapse, and general hypermobility. With over 30 exercises and habit modifications, this book presents a whole-body corrective program to address the forces overloading the core in the first place. *Diastasis Recti* is for any man or woman wanting to improve both the function and the appearance of their abdomen. Book jacket.

Additional Resources

Postnatal Exercises - BCAAFC

The following exercises will help strengthen and tone your abdominal muscles, to help protect your spine and maintain a good posture. Repeat each exercise 10 times, 3 x a day.

Nourish Move Love | The BEST At-Home Workouts (for FREE)

Active Rest Goal: 20-30 Minute Walk .

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Post Natal Information and ...

Gentle exercise is advised up to six weeks postnatally (e.g. walking, pelvic floor exercises, pelvic tilts, abdominal hollowing and knee rolling). At six weeks you may be ready to introduce low ...

12 Week At-Home Maternity Leave Exercise Guide TG 255M

special exercises for postpartum soldiers Four for the Core (Bent leg raise, Shoulder Bridge, Back Bridge, Quadraplex) Hip Stability Drill (Lateral Leg Raise, Medial Leg Raise, Single Leg Tuck,...

Postpartum Fitness - My Doctor Online

To regain the level of fitness you had before you became pregnant, you'll need to pace yourself, set realistic goals, and maintain a regular exercise routine. If you exercised during your ...

Returning To Exercise Postpartum - 6 Week Training Program

Below you'll find three full-body, bodyweight-only workouts (along with progressions for each). Here are instructions for which workouts to do based on the number of days you work out ...

GUIDE TO PRENATAL AND POSTPARTUM CORE TRAINING

Focus on exercises that promote healthy posture (strengthening the back and glute muscles, stretching the chest, and focus on minimizing an extreme arch in the low back. The goal is a ...

Postnatal Progressive Abdominal Strengthening - Royal ...

Continuing with your pelvic floor exercises throughout your postnatal strengthening will support the work you are doing and maintain a healthy bladder and bowel habit.

POSTNATAL EXERCISES - Fernandez Hospital

Allow yourself to do as much as your body allows you to without exertion. You can also help your body heal by doing some gentle exercises regularly. You must particularly concentrate on ...

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Postnatal Exercises and Advice

It is important to work the deep muscles first before starting exercises such as sit-ups. When these muscles are strong you can progress on to the other exercises.

12 Weeks of Postpartum Workouts - Breaking Muscle

Chest Opener x 20 (Hold a PVC pipe or broomstick with a wide grip at hip level. Open your chest and rotate the pipe until it is behind your body, then bring it back to the original position. Keep ...

CORE RESTORE - Moms Into Fitness

For exercises that help stabilize a weak core by concentrating on these key core muscles, follow our Core Restore program. This program breaks it down to the basic foundation (working your ...

Early Postpartum Exercises - Interior Health

These early exercises are a good place to start when you're ready to start exercising after birthing. Most people who give birth benefit from strengthening their pelvic floor and abdominal ...

Physiotherapy advice for women after pregnancy

Before starting any further exercises (except pelvic floor exercises), make sure you have correctly practiced the following basic abdominal contractions. This exercise will reduce your risk of injury

Post-natal exercises

When should I start these exercises? You should start the exercises as soon as possible after the birth. What do I need to do? 1. Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles: Your pelvic floor muscles ...

Postpartum Bodyweight Workouts – Girls Gone Strong

In this guide, you'll find full-body bodyweight workouts you can do at home at every stage of your postpartum journey. These workouts are organized by phase, as well as by length, so that you ...

Exercise for Postnatal Rehabilitation – Exercise is Medicine ...

Specific rehabilitative exercises can be performed from 24 hours following a natural vaginal birth with no complications, such as transverse abdominal activation (TVA) and pelvic tilts. Mild ...

POSTPARTUM EXERCISE

Women who have had a Caesarean de-livery are advised to wait 6 to 8 weeks before resuming physical activity, especially advanced abdominal exercises and squats. The 6-week ...

Give me strength: pre- and post natal exercises – NSW Health

As well as keeping fit with walking, swimming or other activities, you need to take special care of the muscles in your tummy, back and pelvic floor. These muscles are under more stress than ...

pregnancy Diastasis Rectus Abdominis after – NHS TIMS

This leaflet provides information and exercises for women with stretched abdominal muscles which is known as diastasis rectus abdominis, following pregnancy and provides postural ...

Postnatal Exercises – BCAAFC

The following exercises will help strengthen and tone your abdominal muscles, to help protect your spine and maintain a good ...

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