

After Pregnancy: Exercises

Introduction

Here are some examples of exercises that can help after pregnancy. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercise if you start to have pain.

Your doctor or physical therapist will tell you when you can start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

How to do the exercises

Tummy tuck



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1. Lie on your back, and place two fingers just inside your hip bones so you can feel your lower belly muscles.
2. Take a deep breath in.
3. As you breathe out, pull your belly button in toward your spine, as if you are trying to zip up a tight pair of jeans. You should feel your lower belly muscles pull slightly away from your fingers as the muscles tighten.
4. Hold for about 6 seconds, but do not hold your breath.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
6. Repeat several times a day, and try to hold your lower belly muscles in for longer as you get stronger.
7. Practice doing this exercise while you are standing, such as when you are standing in line, or sitting.

Heel slides



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1. Lie on the floor with your knees bent, and place two fingers just inside your hip bones so you can feel your lower belly muscles. Your feet should be flat on the floor.
2. Pull your belly button in toward your spine. You should feel your lower belly muscles pull slightly away from your fingers as the muscles tighten.
3. Keep holding your belly button in as you slowly slide one foot along the floor until your leg is out straight.
4. Slowly slide the leg back to your starting position while making sure that you keep holding your belly button in.
5. Do not arch or move your back as you are doing this. Do not hold your breath.
6. Relax and repeat with your other leg.
7. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Knee-to-chest stretch



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1. Lie on your back with one knee bent and the other leg straight.
2. Clasp your hands together under your bent knee and bring the knee to your chest. Keep your lower back pressed to the floor.
3. If it hurts your back to keep your opposite leg straight as you stretch, bend that knee too, and keep that foot flat on the floor.
4. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds.
5. Relax and lower the knee to the starting position.
6. Repeat with the other leg.
7. Repeat 2 to 4 times with each leg.

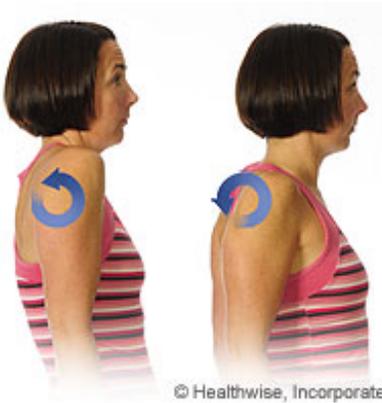
Neck rotation



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1. Sit in a firm chair, or stand up straight.
2. Keeping your chin level, turn your head to the right, and hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
3. Turn your head to the left and hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times to each side.

Shoulder rolls



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1. Sit comfortably with your feet shoulder-width apart. You can also do this exercise while standing.
2. Roll your shoulders up, then back, and then down in a smooth, circular motion.
3. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Midback stretch



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If you have knee pain, do not do this exercise.

1. Kneel on the floor, and sit back on your ankles.
2. Lean forward, place your hands on the floor, and stretch your arms out in front of you. Rest your head between your arms.
3. Gently push your chest toward the floor, reaching as far in front of you as possible.
4. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Back stretches



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1. Get down on your hands and knees on the floor.
2. Relax your head and allow it to droop. Round your back up toward the ceiling until you feel a nice stretch in your upper, middle, and lower back. Hold this stretch for as long as it feels comfortable, or about 15 to 30 seconds.
3. Return to the starting position with a flat back while you are on your hands and knees.
4. Let your back sway by pressing your stomach toward the floor. Lift your buttocks toward the ceiling.
5. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds.
6. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Hamstring stretch (lying down)



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1. Lie flat on your back with your legs straight. If you feel discomfort in your back, place a small towel roll under your lower back.
2. Holding the back of your leg, lift your leg straight up and toward your body until you feel a stretch at the back of your thigh.
3. Hold the stretch for at least 30 seconds.

4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.
5. Switch legs and repeat steps 1 through 4.

Calf stretch



1. Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall at about eye level. Put your leg about a step behind your other leg.
2. Keeping your back leg straight and your back heel on the floor, bend your front knee and gently bring your hip and chest toward the wall until you feel a stretch in the calf of your back leg.
3. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.
5. Repeat steps 1 through 4, but this time keep your back knee bent.
6. Switch legs and repeat steps 1 through 5.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

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