

## Postnatal Exercise

During pregnancy, mothers gain weight, ligaments and joints are loosen, abdominal muscles are stretched. After delivery, it takes some time for the body returning to normal.

Postnatal exercises help you tone up the lax abdominal muscle and prevent low back pain.

Mothers can start doing postnatal exercise 24 hours after a normal delivery. Mothers having a caesarean section should consult physiotherapist or doctor before starting exercise.

When you exercise, keep normal breathing. Start with gentle exercise and step up the exercise level gradually

### Exercises for lower back

- First lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat.



- Roll both knees to left close to the mattress. Hold for a few seconds. Then roll the knees to right.

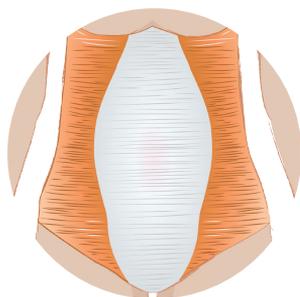


- Repeat several times

## Exercises to tone up abdominal muscles

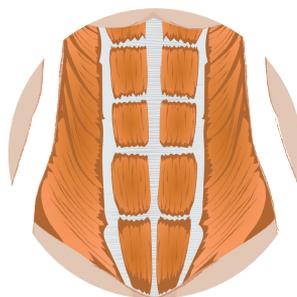
- Abdominal muscles have two main groups; the deep or transverse abdominal muscles, and outer abdominal muscles
- It is important to strengthen the deep group of muscles first as this reduces the strain on the back
- Once these muscles are strong, you can tone up the outer abdominal muscles

Strengthen First



Deep abdominal muscles

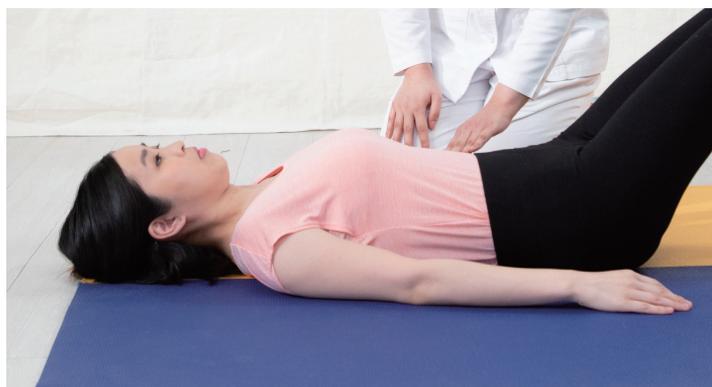
Then strengthen



Outer abdominal muscles

After delivery, you can carry out these exercise while sitting or lying down once you feel well

- First, breathe normally



- When breathing out, gently draw in your lower abdominal muscles
- Meanwhile tighten the pelvic floor muscles



- Do not hold your breath while you exercise. Keep breathing normally



- Hold for a few seconds then relax
- Repeat several times, with a few seconds interval
- Then increase the muscle tone gradually. Hold the muscles in for a maximum of 10 seconds and repeat up to 10 times

Once getting used to doing the exercise lying down, you can do it while sitting and try the next exercise.

- First, lie on the back with knees bent and draw in the abdominal muscles
- Then gently tighten pelvic floor and hip muscles, tilt the pelvis back so that the back is flat on the mattress



- Hold this position for a maximum of ten seconds, then relax
- Repeat 10 times as a set. Perform 2 sets a day
- Breathe normally. Do not hold your breath

When you can complete the set of movements smoothly, you can try to raise your head as you tighten the abdominal muscles



- Hold this position up to 5 seconds then relax
- Repeat 10 times as a set. Perform 2 sets a day

Beware if your abdomen bulges when you raise up your head.  
This means that the muscle is still not suitable for doing this exercise. Persist doing the exercise without raising the head

### **Tone up both sides of your abdomen alternately**

- Tone up the abdominal muscle on both sides alternately



- Lift your head and shoulder. Bring the right shoulder pointing towards the left knee
- Then both hands touch left knee. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax



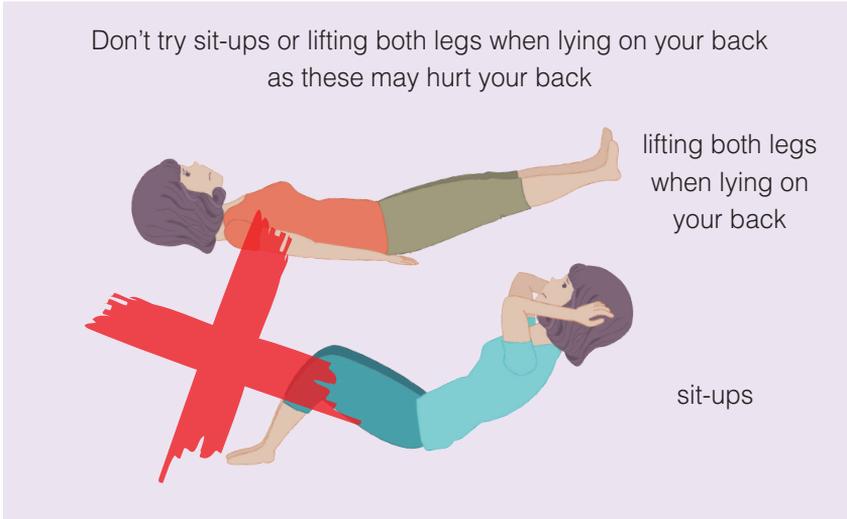
- Then repeat the exercise with your hands touching the right knee



- Repeat 10 times as a set. Perform 2 sets a day

## Tighten the abdominal and pelvic floor muscles

Whenever you lift up your child, carry objects or do housework, tighten the abdominal and the pelvic floor muscles to reduce the strain on your back



## Resume physical activities

Start with a gentle activity like walking for 10 minutes. Then, increase the length and intensity of the activity gradually.

Once your abdominal and back muscles become stronger, you can try more strenuous exercise, like running or jumping.

Listen to your body when you work out and follow your own pace.

Mothers can join postnatal exercise classes organised by the Department of Physiotherapy in Hospital Authority. If you have problems with abdominal or back muscle, you should consult healthcare professionals.

## Pay attention to postures and care of lower back

Shortly after delivery, abdominal muscles are still weak, joints and tendons at the back are still lax. Apart from doing postnatal exercises, mothers should also pay attention to their postures

### Avoid bending your back

- When lifting an object, avoid bending your back
- To lift objects, bend knees, then straighten the legs to rise



(The information is prepared by the Department of Health and the physiotherapy department of Hospital Authority)

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