

EXERCISES FOR AFTER YOUR BIRTH

- ◆ Pelvic floor - Kegels
- ◆ Abdominal tightening will tone abdominal muscles. Try simple head lifts while supporting your abdominal muscles.
- ◆ Pelvic tilts
 - Tone abdominal muscles
 - Relieve backache
 - Aid in return of pre-pregnancy postureBegin this exercise soon after birth
- 1. Lie flat in bed with your knees bent.
- 2. Tighten your abdominal muscles, tilt your pelvis and press your lower back into the bed for a count of 2 or 3.
- 3. Increase gradually to a count of 5.
- 4. After a few days, do pelvic tilts while standing, squatting, sitting, or on hands and knees.
- ◆ Wide arm circles
 - Increases circulation in the breasts
 - May help prevent and relieve clogged milk ducts
- ◆ Relaxation - Continue the relaxation exercises you used during pregnancy.

EXERCISES FOR AFTER A CESAREAN

- ◆ Tightening the abdominal muscles as in a pelvic tilt will not damage the incision, even though it may feel as though it will.
- ◆ Try huffing to clear your lungs, especially if you have had general anesthesia. Hug a pillow over your incision and “huff” forcefully. The quick movement of air is usually enough to clear secretions and is much less painful than coughing.
- ◆ Stimulate your abdominal muscles gently to contract. This will increase circulation and promote healing.
- ◆ Foot circles, sliding your heel up and down the bed, pelvic tilts and bridging (described below) all help strengthen muscles and increase circulation.
- ◆ Bridging
- 1. Lie on your back, knees bent.
- 2. Contract your abdominal wall and buttocks and slowly raise your hips off the floor until your trunk and legs are in a straight line. (Only your feet, shoulders, head, and arms stay touching the floor. Your trunk, buttocks, thighs and calves become a "bridge".)
- 3. Hold for a few seconds while breathing, then slowly lower.
- 4. Contract your pelvic floor during this exercise, because gravity is now a help rather than a liability.

Adapted from several sources, primarily
Essential Exercises for the Childbearing Year
by Elizabeth Noble
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