

If you have any queries, please contact the pelvic health physiotherapy team on:

0151 430 1878

If you are still struggling after following this advice you can directly contact The Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Team on:

0151 430 1890 at Whiston Hospital

You can also speak to your Midwife, Consultant or GP about a referral for physiotherapy if required.

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Warrington Road,  
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## Advice and Exercises Following a Caesarean Delivery

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in alternative languages / formats on request.

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## What is a Caesarean Section?

A caesarean section is an operation that delivers your baby through your abdomen (tummy).

It is a major operation which will take several weeks to recover from.

It generally takes longer to recover from a caesarean section than a vaginal birth.

It is important that you take time to rest but also know how to help your body recover.

In the early days following your caesarean you may experience discomfort/pain getting in/out bed, walking or carrying out any activity that causes strain on your tummy or when you open your bladder or bowels.

## Bladder Care

You will have a catheter in your bladder for approximately 12 hours after your caesarean.

It is important to start eating and drinking as soon as possible so that as soon as your catheter is removed you can start passing urine normally.

If you are having any difficulties passing urine in the first few hours after the catheter is removed inform your midwife.

It is important to drink normally (1.5 to 2 litres) per day, and water is best.

## Sport

You can start moderate exercise as soon as you feel comfortable and fit enough.

You can start swimming once your scar has healed and bleeding has stopped.

Avoid strong abdominal exercises and competitive sport for at least 3 months.

Care should be taken not to start high-impact activities, such as jumping, jogging, or sports that involve running too soon.

## Scar Massage

Your wound dressing will come off after a couple of days.

It is fine to have a bath or shower as soon as you feel able to after the birth.

Wash over your wound with warm water, avoiding too much soap/bodywash over the area. It is important to keep the area clean and dry.

Once your wound has healed and the scabs have fallen off you can start to gently massage over it.

You can use massage oil such as bio oil whilst massaging.

Try to do this everyday as it will help to reduce sensitivity and tightness of the scar tissue.

To do this place your index and middle finger together at one end of the scar and move along the scar doing gentle circular motions that move the skin underneath.

## Housework

Do not lift anything heavier than your baby for six weeks and try to avoid lifting anything very heavy for three months.

Try to avoid any activity that causes strain for the first few weeks such as prolonged standing, vacuuming, carrying heavy objects or bags.

## Lifting

- Always try to bend your knees.
- Gently draw in your pelvic floor muscles.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Try to breathe out as you lift. Do not hold your breath.
- Keep the object you are lifting in front of your body.

## Sexual Activity

Some women prefer to wait until their 6-week postnatal check but there is no time limit and should be when you feel ready.

## Driving

It is recommended that you do not drive for 4-6 weeks after your caesarean section.

Many insurance companies do not cover you for 4-6 weeks following surgery, so it is essential you check your individual policy.

## Bowel Care

It is important to avoid constipation as this will put an extra pressure on your wound and pelvic floor muscles.

Ensure that you are drinking enough fluid and include plenty of fruit, vegetables and fibre in your diet.

- Do not strain.
- Always sit fully on the toilet seat. Do not hover.
- Have your feet apart and raised up on a stool/support with arms resting comfortably on your thighs.
- Keep your tummy muscles relaxed.
- Avoid holding your breath.
- A slight bearing down will help to move the stool but do not push and push.



## Physiotherapy Advice

### Chest/ Respiratory Care

Chest problems may occur following abdominal surgery even if you have no history of respiratory problems.

Pain - If your pain is not well controlled you may be reluctant to take a deep breath or avoid coughing.

It is important to keep your pain under control and take your painkillers regularly.

### Breathing Exercises

To prevent chest problems, it is important to practice breathing exercises:

- Sit as upright as possible
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs as full as possible, hold then breathe out through your mouth
- Repeat 3 times then rest
- Repeat again to loosen any secretions
- If you feel any secretions in your chest, bend your knees up or lean forwards, support your wound and huff, as though you are steaming up a mirror
- Cough up any secretions.

Repeat process until chest feels clear.

## Knee Rolls

To ease back pain and trapped wind:

- Keeping your knees together gently take your knees to one side then over to the other.
- Take your knees as far as you feel comfortable without pulling on your tummy muscles.

After 2/3 weeks when you can comfortably manage the gentle exercises you can progress the exercises.

Never strain or hold your breath when exercising.

Please refer to POGP Fit for Future booklet to progress exercises.

## General advice

### Rest

Rest is important to help with your recovery. Gradually build up your level of activity and rest between activities.

### Walking

Walking is an excellent form of exercise, and you should aim to go for short walks daily gradually increasing the time you are walking.

## Basic abdominal contraction

- As you breathe out, draw in the lower part of your tummy towards the spine. Keep breathing and hold for up to 10 seconds, then relax.
- Do this exercise regularly.
- Tighten these muscles before moving and during activities such as lifting, pulling or pushing.



## Pelvic Tilt

To ease back pain, strengthen abdominal muscles and correct posture.

- Tighten your abdominal muscles as before and flatten your lower back into the bed. Breathe normally and hold for 3 seconds then gently release.
- Repeat little and often.



## Circulation:

It is important to practice simple leg exercises until you are up and about to increase circulation and reduce the risk of blood clots.

- If your ankles are swollen put your feet up with your knees supported.
- Avoid sitting with your legs crossed as this may restrict blood flow.
- Avoid standing still for long periods of time.
- In sitting or lying, bend and stretch your ankles.
- Circle your ankles.
- Press your knees down into the bed and squeeze your buttocks at the same time.
- Bend and straighten your knees.

Repeat each exercise 10 times, at least 3 times a day.



## Positioning

(When resting and feeding your baby):

It is important to be in a comfortable position following your operation. You can lie/sit in any position as long as you feel relaxed and comfortable. Make use of pillows to support you.

Lying on your side with a pillow between your knees can be more comfortable. You can also feed your baby whilst lying on your side.



If sitting whilst feeding your baby always sit well back in the chair or bed.

A small pillow or folded towel behind your waist will support you and may help to ease backache.

If sitting in a chair your feet should reach the floor.

A pillow/pillows on your lap will improve your posture and comfort whilst feeding.



## To Exercise your Pelvic Floor Muscles

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind, and at the same time trying to stop your flow of urine.

You should feel a squeeze and a lift inside the vagina.

Do not hold your breath or clench your buttocks.

- Squeeze and lift the muscles and aim to hold for as many seconds as you can (up to 10), then relax.
- Repeat as many times as you can (up to 10 ) with approximately 4 second rest in between.
- Now do up to 10 short sharp squeezes, then relax.

Practice these exercises several times a day.

It is important to use your pelvic floor whenever you cough, sneeze, laugh, lift, change position, e.g. standing up/sitting down, or on any sudden movement.

This will help to prevent any complications such as urinary leakage.

## Abdominal Exercises

The abdominal muscles act like a corset that supports your back and stabilises your pelvis.

They help reduce the strain on the spine during everyday activity, work and sport.

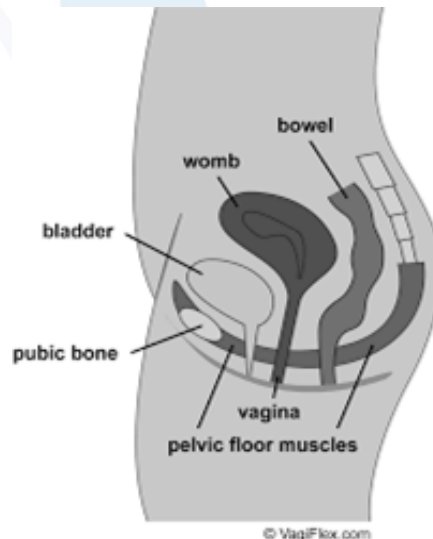
If you notice any bulging of your abdomen during any of the exercises, stop the exercise and seek help from a specialist physiotherapist.

## Pelvic Floor Exercises

The pelvic floor muscles are a sling of muscle at the bottom of your pelvis which support the pelvic organs which include your bladder, bowel and womb.

These muscles may become stretched during pregnancy which may lead to problems.

The pelvic floor muscles help to control your bladder and bowels and help to enhance sexual sensation.



To help prevent problems, you should exercise the pelvic floor muscles regularly.

You can start the pelvic floor exercises as soon as the urinary catheter is removed and you are passing urine normally.

## Turning over in bed

- With your knees bent roll fully onto your side moving the shoulders and knees at the same time
- Place one hand on your tummy to support your stitches.

## Getting out of bed

- From lying on your side, use your hand to push yourself from the bed into a sitting position, straightening your legs over the side of the bed as you do so.
- From the sitting position stand up by leaning forwards and pushing up with your hands.



## Comfort and Posture

It is important to mobilise as soon as possible to help your circulation and breathing and to stop your joints becoming stiff and sore.

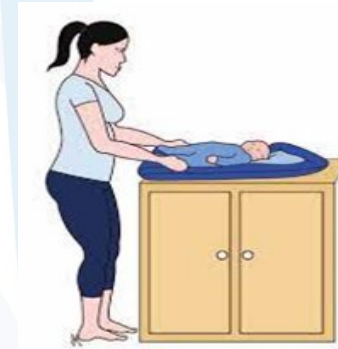
Take your painkillers regularly as prescribed to help you move more easily.

- Poor posture can aggravate pain. Try to stand tall and avoid stooping.
- Stand and walk tall with your tummy and buttocks tucked in.
- Minimise bending and lifting.



## Changing Your Baby

The surface on which you change your baby's nappy should be at waist height to avoid bending and straining your back. It is also easier to lift your baby at this height.



## Bathing

Try to avoid bending forward and straining your back.

Try kneeling down if you are washing your baby in the bath, or if you are standing ensure that the baby is at waist height.

