

Post natal Pilates Programme



Build body awareness & self esteem

Strengthen your core

Improve posture

Decrease back pain



Contents



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How to use this programme



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This programme is a minimum 12 week course and divided into 3 modules (note it may take you longer to complete). Each week you will follow a different set of exercises as your journal will show you later in this document. The modules slowly increase in intensity to safely build your strength. If any of these modules are too challenging causing discomfort or pain repeat the previous module for one more week until you are strong enough to move on. It doesn't matter how long it takes you to complete the course.

- Read through the first part of the document first before you begin. We will look at different sections in more detail in the video modules and as we work through your journal section. Don't be overwhelmed with it as you can come back to anything at anytime and each week we look at a different section in more detail.

- Create a folder you can keep all your paperwork in.

All you need to begin is a mat to get started for the first module. Buy anything you don't own so you are ready for week 5 when we begin the Movement module.

EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED:

Week 1-4

- YOGA OR PILATES MAT

Week 5-12

- A BAND such as a rubber theraband.
- A SMALL PILATES BALL (or you could use a pillow)
- LIGHT HANDWEIGHTS (or you can use bottles of water)
- TRAINERS
- 2-3 BALLOONS (not blown up)

Consistency matters. Stick to your programme as much as you can although avoid putting pressure on yourself or feeling guilty if you miss a day. Aim to catch up the next day if possible otherwise just skip that day. You want to avoid making it stressful.

About me



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I am a Mum too. I have been where you are now. With no guidance or help to get me back on track to exercising again after my baby I began hitting it hard straight after my sign off at 6 weeks. Waiting until the 6 week check was all I knew. With a 5.5 week retained placenta, infections, terrible back pain, weak core, diastasis and pain in my hips I had NO IDEA what doing vigorous exercise would do to my body and how long the damage would last.

My passion for all my training has come from my own experiences. I want to help others and provide a safe way for you to get your body back so you have information and know what you can and 'shouldn't' be doing. Although it would be very easy for you to share this programme with friends I ask you not to and appreciate how much work and training I have put into compiling this for you as this is my job and my passion.

Always very sporty and fit, pregnancy was hard as my body was physically tired and getting heavier as bump grew. I found running difficult (yes I was still running and doing sit ups!! EEEK). I still tried to do all the things that I was used to doing and wondered why my back was hurting so much.

If only 'someone' was there to tell me how to do things safely.

Pilates was always something I would nip in and out of pre-pregnancy but my main love was running and fast impact classes (oh how things have now changed).

Pregnancy left me with pain in my back, a weak core, bad posture, a small diastasis (which I never knew about as was

never checked), and sore hips. These factors combined with breastfeeding and starting impact exercise meant that I was getting injured over and over again. This made me want to learn about my body! And understand WHY... and how to fix it.

With lots of research, training and many exams I qualified as a teacher of Pilates (qualified 2016 when my daughter was 4) and Yoga (qualified 2018). Now I can help others on the road to recovery. There is a real buzz from the way I can watch client's bodies change and their posture improve. Believing that every person no matter of age, size and flexibility should make Pilates and Yoga part of their weekly routine. Pilates and Yoga are my passions.

Learning about pre and post natal exercise was a big learning curve and I was horrified when I learnt how much there was to it and what 'I' had been doing in both pre and post natal that was not recommended.

My knowledge is now your knowledge and if you follow this programme you should avoid all the problems I had. The post natal body is as fascinating as the pre natal one and there is so much to learn. I have taken many courses and this programme has been a dream of mine to write for many years while my daughter was young. Included is not too much jargon and the bits I feel you should know in simple terms.

Years on, due to my keenness to get back to normal exercise and pre pregnancy fitness and body, I still suffer with injuries I gained and do Pilates and Yoga daily to keep my symptoms at bay.

My job is my life and I get great pleasure helping women regain their strength and seeing and hearing of your results.

Bunny x:)

If only 'someone' was there to tell me how to do things safely

I wanted to feel like me again

The Right Time To Exercise



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Gentle exercise (such as walking and stretching) can generally be started as soon as comfortable after giving birth. Remember that every body and every delivery is unique and so you need to feel ready. Talk with your doctor/midwife about when is a good time for you to restart an exercise program. The guidelines are gentle exercise from 6 weeks. 12-14 if you have a CSection.

Six weeks after giving birth most of the changes that occur during pregnancy will have returned to normal, but notice that there will be a difference and lack of strength you may of had previously. If you had a caesarean birth, a difficult or complicated birth, it may take a little longer to feel ready to start exercising. Depending on your pre-pregnancy and pregnancy level of fitness, start slow and take every day one step at a time. Your body changes quickly post birth. Start slow and build up to harder levels as you adapt.

Keep in mind your lower back and core abdominal muscles are weaker than they used to be and you are likely to have some pelvic floor dysfunction. Your ligaments and joints are also more supple and pliable, so it is easier to injure yourself by stretching or twisting too much. Abdominal separation may be present still and this rules out lots of exercises performed at gyms and bootcamp type classes. If you dive straight into the wrong form of exercise you are likely to get injured.

Remember 9 months up and 9 months down is a good motto to live by. Be kind and go slow, this way you will see results avoiding injuries and putting you at risk.

In order to prevent injury, avoid high impact exercises, exercises that put pressure on your joints and movements that involve rapid direction changes. Sit ups or planks are not advised and you should stick with recommended exercises in this programme until you are stronger.



Benefits Of Post Natal Exercise



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Who will benefit

- Any woman who wants to know more about her pelvic floor, core and overall health.
- Women who want to feel fit and stronger.
- Women whom experience leaking when they laugh, jump, run, or sneeze (or all of these).
- Any woman who wants strengthen her core. (Not just for postnatal).
- Women who want to know more about their body.
- Women with a small abdominal separation (diastasis recti).
- Women with a tight or overactive pelvic floor.
- Women suffering from lower back pain.
- Women who are keen to learn the importance of food and the benefits of a good diet and hydration.
- Women who have seen a clinician about a low level prolapse and been told to 'do your pelvic floor exercises'.



**Pelvic floor activation
needs to be automatic
not forced**

The results

Feel better on the inside and out, feel stronger and more able to function. Moving through this programme, you will come to understand your body and find out what works for you. A woman/mother is generally the wheel of the family and when you can be strong, positive and feel good then you can be a better Mum and a better YOU.

I believe 100% if you commit and see this programme through, working on each module without racing ahead, you will feel stronger both on the inside and out.



Postnatal Exercise Concerns And Considerations



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I believe medicine can be a carefully controlled exercise programme. Although it needs to be the correct exercise for where your body is at a given time.

Three essential requirements:

- The quality of the movement.
- The quality of the breath.
- The quality of the exercise.

The more knowledge you have about your body and how you function and how your pelvic floor functions the less you will experience pelvic floor symptoms.

Don't rush it

You can only build strength slowly so don't rush your journey. Eating the right things, daily movement and taking time is the only way to see results.

Listen you your body

Your body will give you signals all the way through your

journey just as it did when you were pregnant. Listen to those signals for days of no energy and opt out, just make sure those days don't become frequent. Look to your catch up videos for inspiration, do some mediation and breath work or read up again when you feel like this.

You should never experience pain and if anything hurts then stop straight away. Try it again in another week and if it still causes discomfort then maybe that exercise isn't right for you yet so leave it a few more weeks.

If you have bleeding, loss of bladder control or dizziness then see your midwife or Dr. Keep looking out for changes in your abdominals such as a hernia or reopening your Diastais.

Gentle activity for new mums

It can be a challenge to make time for yourself but after labour it is important you recover fully before doing too much.

Gentle stretching and core exercises.

Walking to keep active and moving daily.

Overcoming Barriers To Exercise



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Barriers to Exercising

- Stress incontinence
- Lack of motivation
- Tiredness
- Breastfeeding
- Postnatal depression
- Lack of self-esteem/confidence
- Fear of injury
- Fear of leaving the baby
- Time management
- Childcare
- Reduce joint stability

Overcoming these Barriers

- Aim to set aside 30 minutes a day to your self care
- Use the journal to keep your focus
- Chat to other women in the programme in the private facebook group for support
- Have your baby with you when you exercise
- Your confidence will grow as you feel stronger and in more control of your body
- The exercises are safe for post natal and those with abdominal separation
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself if you miss some sessions. Your results will be slower although you will still get there
- Get your partner to make you a healthy packed lunch each day before he/she goes to work
- Keep a gratitude diary with one or two sentences in per day
- Encourage new Mum friends to join the programme as well
- Look forward to how good you will feel when your body is stronger and you can do what you love again



Keep a gratitude diary with one or two sentences in per day

ENJOY THE JOURNEY



Medical Conditions

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Pre existing medical conditions may include

- Hypertension
- Pre-Eclampsia
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Autoimmune conditions
- Respiratory conditions

Postnatal period week 0-6

- Sore breasts

Enlarged when milk comes in and breastfeeding can make you sore and laying on your front can be uncomfortable. Be sure to wear comfortable and correct bra's for your changing size (no underwired bras).

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Pressure on a nerve in your wrist. It causes tingling, numbness and pain in your hand and fingers. Can be caused by constantly picking up your baby. It can take months to get better but wearing a wrist support will help.

- Diastasis Recti (see separate page)
- Hormone Relaxin

Making joints unstable (up to 5 months after delivery and maybe longer if breastfeeding)

- Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD)
also known as Pelvic Girdle Pain

Loosening of the pelvic joints. Usually goes soon after delivery but you can be left with ongoing problems and pain.

- Dizziness

An increase in blood can cause low blood pressure and dizziness.

- Iron levels (Anaemia)

Iron deficiency anaemia is caused by lack of iron, often because of blood loss or pregnancy.

- Low or High Blood pressure

Changes in blood flow, lack of blood during delivery, pre-eclampsia can all have an effect on blood pressure.

- Haemorrhoids and Varicose Veins

During pregnancy in the 1st and 3rd trimester a reduction in

blood pressure and Progesterone can lead to more strain on the veins and valves leading to haemorrhoids and/or varicose veins.

- Lochia (postnatal bleeding)

You will bleed from your vagina after your birth and this will carry on for a few weeks. It will gradually turn a darker brown colour and decrease until it finally stops. If this gets worse consult your midwife.

- Infected CSec scar

Any changes in your scar could be a sign of infection. It is usual for your scar to be sore and change in appearance. Look out for any pain, leaking, bleeding, swelling in legs, swollen scar, discharge, vaginal bleeding or urine leaking.

- Risk of urine infections

A bladder infection can occur after delivery and may need antibiotics to treat. Drink plenty of water especially if you are breastfeeding. A symptom of this can be pain when urinating (although this can happen directly after birth due to soreness).

- Bladder control

You may find it difficult to keep control of your bladder. It is never too early to begin your pelvic floor exercises (see pelvic floor page)

- Piles

Common after the strain of birth, usually they can go away quickly. Eat lots of fibre, fruit and veg to help.

Extended period 6 weeks +

Some further conditions you may experience as your body changes and adapts. You may also continue with some of the symptoms above. Discuss any concerns at your 6 week check and always consult your midwife with any questions or if you notice changes.

- Joint instability
- Possible joint and muscle pain
- Tiredness
- Weakened abdominal muscles
- Lower back pain or soreness due to anterior tilt during pregnancy
- Pelvic floor control
- Sore breasts (infection)
- Prolapse

C-Section Healing



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Having had a C-section you may feel very conscious about your body and scar. In time this will heal to a mild scar.

If you have bought this programme before your scar has healed, make sure you wait until you have had sign off before you begin exercising. Allow the air to circulate around the scar and try to keep your body straight rather than curling into a ball. There's a lot of disruption to the entire abdominal wall during the delivery and it is normal to feel tender for some time even after your scar has healed. Abdominal, wound and back pain can continue for months after a caesarean section so stay positive as it will ease over time doing the correct things.

Check for C-Section Scar for healing/pain/numbness and discuss any changes with your midwife.

Scar tissue and massage

Scar tissue can build up on the inside of the body without you knowing. Pelvic organ dysfunction, incontinence, scar pain, reduced sensation and a feeling of restriction are often due to the build up of post-surgical scar tissue. For many women post C-Section this can result in a pulling or trapped sensation when they eventually return to full-range movements as part of their daily lives and exercise programmes. Unless otherwise advised, gentle massage around the area can really help to break down the collagen fibres and loosen things off once it has healed.

- Lie flat on your back allowing your muscles to relax.
- Gently massage a non-perfumed moisturiser into and around your scar two to three times a day to hydrate the skin and make it supple.
- Use your finger tips to rotate the scar in a circular motion, slow but firm for a few minutes, more if the scar feels harder under the finger tips.

You can ask your midwife about this or contact a Women's Health Physio for more information.

Diastasis Recti

Even without performing a natural delivery Diastasis can still be present and so be sure you are checking for this and do the Rec Check. Breath work is essential for core synergy and also try to relax with some meditation. Keep a frequent water intake and good daily nutrition, eating protein at each meal for healing. See the DR section.

Post natal depression

There may be a somewhat higher incidence of postnatal depression in the first weeks after childbirth for women who have caesarean sections, but this difference does not persist. Some women who have had caesarean sections, especially emergency caesareans, find the acceptance of a 'different' delivery can take time as they come to terms with what happened so suddenly.



Safely returning to normal

- **Changing and bathing:**
 - Adapt working surfaces to waist height e.g. changing tables and bathe baby at right height for you
- **Lifting:**
 - To lift, pull in your stomach and pelvic floor muscles, bend from the knees and keep your back straight. Keep the load close to your body as you lift up.
 - You can lift and carry your baby, but try to avoid lifting anything heavier during the first 6 weeks.
 - You should not lift your baby in a car seat; transport your baby in a pushchair or lift them
 - If you have older children encourage them to climb up to you while you are sitting.
- **Housework:**
 - Avoid activities that cause strain to your abdomen and pelvic floor during the first few weeks, e.g. prolonged standing and bad posture.
 - Accept offers of help with housework and ask family for help
 - In the first 6 weeks avoid hoovering and heavy lifting, a basket of wet washing can be heavier than you think.
- **Driving**
 - You are normally allowed to return to driving at 6 weeks, check with your GP/Midwife.
 - You will need to inform your insurance company that you have had an operation.
 - Putting a pillow between the seat belt and your stomach for comfort on car journeys.
 - Before the first journey check you do an emergency stop without any pain? Opt for short journeys first with a passenger in case you get into difficulty.
- **Returning to sport**
 - Speak to your midwife about returning to exercise.



Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

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Many women of all ages suffer with Pelvic Floor Dysfunction, this isn't just post natal women. PFD isn't just about delivery of your baby and many CSec deliveries can still have PFD.

Although much more common after your baby, it isn't acceptable to live your life with this with leaking and possible bowel looseness as well going on and on. You only have one Pelvic Floor. This is why you are doing something about it now, in this programme, so you can function correctly.

Pelvic floor control has been known as 'squeeze before you cough or sneeze' for many years and you will be ok. It is more than this and needs to be an automatic response.

Performing Kegal's (where you squeeze and release) is advised by many health practitioners. While this type of training can help and be effective it doesn't always work. A stationary movement pattern won't help you when you begin to move and, for example, lift a basket of washing off the floor. Your body won't know what to do or know how to handle the extra load you are putting on it when you squat to stand carrying weight. Imagine how many times a day you lift your baby. And yes you want to be able to take your child on a trampoline one day!

We need to get your body, breath and movement working together naturally for optimal functionality. By building strength and learning about how to activate/release in movement, this programme will give you long term results. You need to learn how to release too as a constant contracted muscle causes further problems. Imagine keeping your bicep tensed all the time and the pressure the muscle and the tension the rest of your body would have.

Posture plays a large part of how your Pelvic Floor can function and in pregnancy you get pulled into an anterior tilt (see diagram too arched) due to your large bump. The lower back gets very tight and your pelvic floor becomes weakened because of the extra weight and pressure. Your rib cage should sit over your pelvis. Strengthening around the hip is

1 out of 5 women suffer with Pelvic Floor Dysfunction



required also to help stabilise the pelvis and pelvic floor. An avocado has a huge pip and the flesh protects the pip, if we can get our hip muscles strong we can protect the pip!

You have an imaginary canister inside you and this canister can put pressure on your pelvic floor and cause damage. This canister works with your diaphragm and breath needs to synergise to movement to reduce pressure.

Through this programme we will work on your deep abdominal muscles, your breath and diaphragm, your posture and look at this in more details while we move.

Prolapse

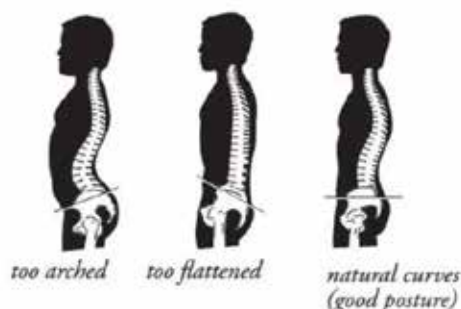
50% of women who have been pregnant can suffer some sort of prolapse. It can be described as a downward pressure in the pelvic area. The pelvic organ can be pushing down and out through vagina or anus. This can take longer to heal and allow 4-6 months making sure you do all of the right things and no impact or running until healed.

Avoid:

- overhead pushing
- jogging
- impact exercises

Do:

- Keep moving with this programme and the safe exercise
- Focus on breath work
- Be patient
- Opt for seated, lying or side lying exercises



Diet And Hydration



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A well balanced diet from the eat well plate is recommended including all food groups to get a healthy balanced diet from all food groups. A well rounded diet should cover most nutrients.

Choosing foods high in vitamins and minerals such as leafy green veg, pulses and wholegrains will give you more energy and natural goodness. Iron levels can get low and anaemia can be common in pregnancy being more likely to happen in the third trimester, if levels are deficient in pregnancy you could still be low in Iron now. Requirement levels of iron are higher in women aged 19-50 anyway to cover menstrual loss and post natal to cover blood lost in birth. Vit C will help to absorb iron and tea and coffee inhibits absorption so aim to leave it 30 minutes after eating if at all - have iron rich foods with a fruit juice or a kiwi which is high in vit C. Breakfast cereals are fortified so good to consume daily picking ones without sugar. An iron supplement may be recommended by your midwife if you are still low.

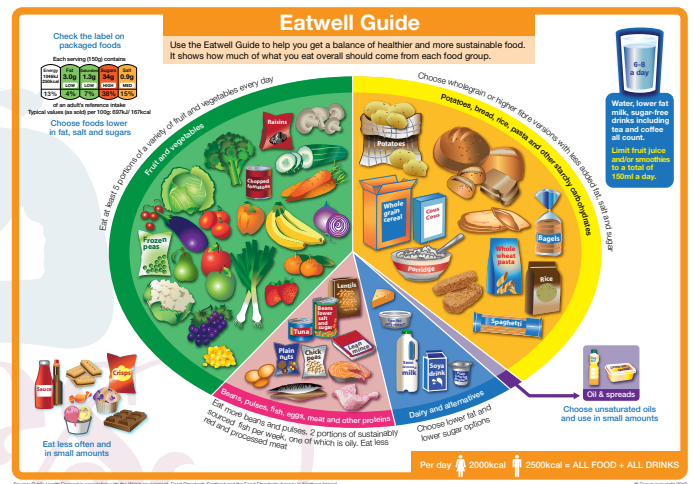
Staying Hydrated

Hydration is needed for energy levels, avoiding constipation and keeping the body hydrated. Sipping water throughout the day to replace water lost through breastfeeding and exercise. You are likely to be getting less sleep which makes staying hydrated even more important. Always aim for plenty of water during the day over high in sugar and caffeine rich drinks.

Healing Nutrition

The way we eat has a big impact on how fast we heal.

- Lots of vegetables and fruit
- Cut out sugar where possible – it will reduce the potential for both healing and fat loss
- Minimum caffeine (remember chocolate contains caffeine)
- Minimum alcohol (high in sugar)
- Eat wholegrain and whole wheat
- Protein at every meal – it's vital for tissue recovery
- Have a healthy breakfast
- Keep hydrated, it will keep you fuller for longer and ward off headaches
- Add more vegetables to every meal
- 150ml of juice per day
- Eat healthy fats such as oily fish, nuts and avocados
- Choose anti-oxidant rich berries on your breakfast
- Eat the rainbow!



www.nutrition.org.uk

Click to go to British Nutrition Foundation website



**Aim for at least
 1.5-2ltr per
 day of water**

Breastfeeding And Hormones



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Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding offers health benefits for Mum and provides all the nutrients for baby. By breastfeeding it helps you to return iron stores back to normal and reduces osteoporosis as it stops menstruation. It also uses 500kcal per day to produce breast milk.

If you do decide / are able to breastfeed aim to breastfeed for 6 months exclusively and then partially breastfeed to 2 years (there is no right or wrong so always choose for you and your baby). A mother's diet when breastfeeding doesn't need any major changes, although with the extra 500 kcal per day you will be expending you will need to eat more and listen to hunger pangs. Filling up on nutritious snacks to provide nutrients to make your milk and staying hydrated is crucial. If you are breastfeeding then your Calcium requirement is higher so have plenty of dairy in your diet. Keep on track with your Iron levels eating plenty of green veg and Iron rich food. It can be an idea to take an Iron supplement if you suspect you maybe anaemic.

Hydration needs to be frequent throughout the day as breastfeeding women require more fluid. This can be made up with all liquids but keeping caffeine drinks to a minimum or better to avoid altogether. Remember caffeine can be an irritant for Pelvic Floor and should be avoided if you suffer with PF weakness. There are no recommended guidelines for breastfeeding women for fluid so aiming for 1.5-2ltr per day should be sufficient. Alcohol should be kept to 1-2 units twice a week or, ideally, avoided.

Vitamin D is recommended to take as a supplement while breastfeeding and 10 mcg per day is the RNI (same as pregnancy) and it boosts the Vitamin D into the babies milk.

Eating a balanced diet with protein, healthy fats and whole carbs will help produce your milk without depleting your stores and energy. Breastfeeding is not a time to diet but make sure you are eating well and cutting out sugary and high fat junk foods.

Wear a well fitted breastfeeding bra to support your engorged breasts to avoid a bad back, stretch marks and also rounded shoulders. Your size will vary during the day and night so have a range of sizes. Avoid underwired or tight bras.

Always check with your Dr or Midwife before changing your diet or taking supplements. RNI may change.

Hormones

You have many changes in your hormones during pregnancy and your emotions can be a bit like a rollercoaster.

Throughout pregnancy, relaxin has affected the ligaments of the pelvis and also the abdominal and pelvic floor muscles, allowing them to stretch and accommodate the growing uterus and allow delivery.

When your body is preparing your cervix for labour Relaxin is produced. It is thought that Relaxin peaks at around week 14 of pregnancy and again around delivery time.

Production tends to cease once the baby has been delivered although the effects of the hormone can stay for up to 6 months and longer if breastfeeding. This can have a huge effect on the connective tissue in the body and make it easy to get injuries. No impact is advised and safe exercises to build strength around all the joints and hips are encouraged.

Be careful and also look out for symptoms of carpal tunnel in your wrist from picking up your baby constantly.



Considerations of Psychological changes



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During pregnancy your body goes through huge changes and the body deals with further changes after your baby has arrived. Feelings can be heightened with the tiredness and physical and mental changes to the body. It is important to discuss all changes with your midwife and be open about any feelings you may be having. Adapting to a new way of life can be a steep learning curve and you will experience normal psychological changes.

As you are keen to start getting your strength, back or regaining new strength, listen to your body and focus on how your body is now and the capabilities you have now. Remember to start small and you will regain your strength and soon be back to your pre pregnancy self. Exercise can help with your mood and mental health but it is crucial your body takes the right exercise to avoid injury.

Some normal changes you maybe experiencing are:

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Low self esteem
- Mild depression
- Panic disorder phobias
- Obsessive compulsive disorders
- Sleeplessness
- Aches and pains
- Memory loss
- Sore breasts



Signs of post natal depression:

- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Sleeplessness
- Aches and pains
- Feeling unwell
- Memory loss and lack of concentration
- Feeling a lack of coping
- Feeling isolated
- Constant crying
- Loss of appetite
- Change of personality
- Not getting enjoyment from anything
- Loss of interest in your baby
- Over anxious about your baby



10 Tips For Being Strong On The Inside



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Download Squeezy - the NHS pelvic floor app

Pelvic floor exercises are for life, you only have one! Vary your positions between laying, sitting, standing. Never hold yourself when urinating. Make time for your pelvic floor exercises and invest in yourself and your body. Learn to relax the pelvic floor as this is just as important as strength.

Use your breathe effectively

Work with your core synergy to make sure you don't add unnecessary load onto your pelvic floor. Always breathe out to lift, push, effort. Connect your pelvic floor with your breath. Make sure both are working together. Get your internal canister working. Always activate your pelvic floor to protect your vaginal wall.



Think about your diet

Sugar, caffeine, alcohol and wheat can affect people and cause irritation to your bladder and bowel.

Put up some small cues as reminders

Use small stickers on the inside of a cupboard, on your bathroom mirror, on the key hook, dash board of car and use them as reminders to do your pelvic floor exercises.

Notice any changes

If you notice any changes in your pelvic floor function go and see a women's physiotherapist - I recommend paying for this as you will get a fast service.



Do your exercises or join a class

Pilates works on the pelvic floor and building strength around the pelvic region as well as overall body strength, posture and well-being.

Relax your toilet habits

Don't push or bear down when going to the toilet, drink more water, eat more fruit, vegetables and fibre. Try and sit on the toilet with a block or step under your feet to raise your knees higher than your hips and lean forward to let your bowel work effectively.



Case Study



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Diastasis Case Study

During a regular mat Pilates class a new lady joined to try and strengthen her core as she had heard Pilates would stop her back hurting. A mother of three children, when starting class with myself her youngest was 22 months old – so not a baby. This lady had been suffering with terrible back ache and feeling very weak so had been attending a boot camp type class to regain her strength again and have some ‘me time’ as all mummies need. In addition to this Clare had been starting to run for cardio fitness.

After a quick chat and a physical assessment we discovered that a large tummy separation (diastasis) was present and my whole hand could fit between her muscles. The recommended guidelines state that a two finger space is acceptable as having closed ‘the gap’.

With careful guidance and a good nudge, a Dr appointment was made and the Dr was also astonished that this hadn’t been previously been picked up in almost 2 years of her suffering since her youngest’s birth. She continued coming to Pilates and we adapted and guided with the correct exercises and with support, homework and consistency from her within 6 months the gap closed to 2 fingers. This just shows what is possible with the right attitude, the right diet, the right exercise and more to the point the correct type of exercises. The progress is fantastic and now she is able to carry out daily life without pain and is regaining the strength into her core to enable her to start running again.

Clare’s story...

“With three children 5 years and under, it took me until my youngest turned 18 months or so to make the headspace to start thinking about exercise and diet again! Knowing that I wouldn’t be trying for any more babies, I was so excited and bought some new kit before joining a weekly circuits/boot camp session. It felt so good to be out and sweating again with loud music, burpees, planks, sit-ups and other adults! I was energised and started to also do a couple of 3-5k jogs per week as well as the circuits.

Very soon I started to get terrible backache by the end of each day and noticed rather than getting my tummy tone back, it was as if it was getting more distended. Whilst pregnant with my third (and for years before) I did Pilates and Yoga but hadn’t returned to it as I thought getting back into cardio fitness would have faster results for toning and strength. I couldn’t have been more wrong!

I was so thankful when a friend then recommended me to give

Bunny’s classes a go. Within a couple of classes with Bunny, I fast realised how I was unable to do so many of exercises she taught. My lower back was so weak, I couldn’t actually do a sit up (which I had been attempting to do at speed for months of circuits!!) so Bunny took a look and was as shocked as me at the huge tummy muscle split or Diastasis Recti she found. At first I was pretty sad as everything I had been doing for the months before was detrimental and just causing more damage. I then became pretty angry at the medical system as this had never been pointed out to me at my post partum sign off...nearly two years ago!!!

Bunny prompted me to demand some physio treatment via the NHS and very kindly wrote a script for me to take to my GP in order that that was organised. He assumed on examination that I had a newborn baby and was horrified when I said he was two! He signed me up for 6 months of physio and I have had checks every three weeks along with daily exercises to do. That alongside my weekly Pilates with Bunny and some very gentle jogs, have brought my gap of about four fingers to two!! Quite incredible and the backache has pretty much gone by the end of each day. I have become so much more mindful when carrying the kids or doing everyday chores. I have also started hula hooping which was recommended for the core.... and is great for a laugh too!!

This is a lengthy write up but without Bunny, I would have been in real trouble if I gave carried on with the circuits. I hope I will get back to that someday but for now, to be mending so well is just fantastic. Thank you Bunny. “

From Bunny – Clare had not realised that she had Diastasis and thankfully I spotted it quickly in her first class with me. Clare had not realised that she had Diastasis and thankfully I was able to spot it in her first class with me. Giving her the ‘right’ type of exercises has helped her to heal, which now means that she can exercise normally and do all the things that she loves doing again. Her hard work has really paid off!

You don’t need to have a large gap to be experiencing symptoms. Perform the programme at each stage until your symptoms reduce. Don’t give up as it can be a long haul.

Further Information



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Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists – RCOG UK

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/>

American Congress of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists ACOG

<http://www.acog.org/>

NHS Squeezy

<https://www.squeezyapp.com/directory/>

Couch to 5k

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>





Let's begin

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Now you have the information it is your chance to make a difference as we begin to move. Maybe take this week to familiarise yourself with everything ready to start next week. Check you have considered all the previous information, filled the health questionnaire in and checked for Diastasis Recti.

You will have received an email and a link to join a private group on Facebook. The classes are online and available anytime with a link to these in the private Facebook Group. I am honoured to have you on this journey and ask you to respect all my hard work, training and time to provide this programme by keeping this document to yourself BUT telling all your friends about it. I want to provide my knowledge and help as many new Mums as possible and have priced this accordingly.

Follow the journal weekly to see which classes to do and how many times. Stick to the classes for that week repeating them as many weeks as you need to feel confident with them. Everyone is at different levels on starting this programme so only you will know.

- Print the 3 month Journal, filling in your start date on page one. If you don't have a printer then start your own calendar with 12 blank sheets of A4 paper, writing the week commencing at the top. At the beginning of each week copy down your weekly requirements so you don't miss anything.
- Go to <https://www.squezyapp.com>, download the app and begin to watch the videos - you will be reminded in your journal so don't worry if you don't get to watch them all as there is a lot of information there.
- Print the exercise cheat sheets. When you are familiar with the videos you can use these. Visit the classes again at any time.
- Join the Private Facebook Group
- Watch the welcome video

Equipment required:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Ball / Pillow
- Band
- A Balloon
- Trainers
- Hand weights
- Water to drink in movement classes

Extra exercise sheets:

- Pelvic Floor Strength & Release Exercises
- Pelvic Floor and Diastasis Recti Exercises

All exercises carried out at your own risk.
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The online classes guide you through your journey

Watch them as many times as you want.

Always seek help from your midwife and if anything causes you pain or discomfort, STOP what you are doing.

Note all exercises are carried out at your own risk.

Home Screening And Health Check Questionnaire



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DATE - _____

Use this page to print and fill in as a point of reference to come back to so you can monitor your progress weekly. Note the first part will not need filling in again a second time once you have started your exercise programme.

Questions for you to ask yourself:

Be honest with yourself about how you feel and answer all answers in detail. Keep this page and then fill in again each week.

- How old is your baby at the start of this course? _____
- Have you had your 6 / 12 week sign off? (6 week for vaginal, 12 for CSec) _____
- What type of delivery did you have? _____
- Have you been checked for Diastasis Rectis (stomach separation)? (see the Rectis page if you haven't) _____
- Did you have complications with your delivery? _____

- Do you have/still have Diastasis? _____
What is the gap for Diastasis? Measure in finger number. _____
Draw on the following page where the gap is and how big it is.
- Is your CSec scar completely healed? _____
- Do you have numbness around your CSec scar? _____
- Are you breastfeeding/still? (note the hormone relaxin stays present) _____
- Do you have normal bladder control? _____
- On your scale of 1-10 for sneezing and coughing, laughing, sneezing how much control do you have with your pelvic floor? IE are you able to perform a pelvic floor contraction? Write an accidents that may have happened to be able to refer back to in future weeks.

- Do you feel fit and well in yourself? _____
- Do you have any signs of post natal depression? _____
- Are there any new symptoms you have noticed? Document any feelings or changes mentally or physically.

Diastasis Recti - The 'Rec check'



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What is Diastasis Recti?

In your second and third trimesters of pregnancy the uterus stretches to accommodate the growing uterus and baby and the linea alba (the line dividing the six pack, and rectus abdominis muscles) separates. If you have good abdominal tone usually this isn't a problem and will naturally come together in the early weeks following birth. Sometimes this does not join back together and will reduce the ability of abdominal muscles to control the pelvis and spine.

The two sides of the muscle need to be re-connected before you start exercising this muscle area otherwise you risk strengthening the muscles in a separated state and they will then never rejoin! If you exercise too early then you could end up with a life long belly 'pooch'. Your organs are not held in! This is quite rare to not re-join but must be checked.

The risks of developing Diastasis are greater in women who:

- are expecting more than one baby (or just have a large bump!)
- have had abdominal separation with a previous pregnancy
- are very petite
- have a pronounced sway back or poor abdominal muscle tone
- have a close gap in age between conceiving again
- perform non-recommended post natal exercises



How to check if you still have Diastasis Recti?

The object of this section is to determine how many fingers will fit in the space between the two recti muscles. As previously stated, you are aiming for a two finger gap or less. You also want to determine the condition of the connective tissue - the further your fingers will go towards the spine, the weaker the connective tissue. You are aiming for less than a 2 finger gap. Some Diastasis can require surgical intervention to restore full closure. Don't give up as many women close their gaps years after childbirth, so don't give up hope.

Your core function should show improvement and your intra-abdominal ability to withstand pressure will increase when you heal. Less leaking, back pain, bulging abdominals and visually less pooch.



Start with your index and middle fingers.

STEP #1

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place TWO fingers just above your belly button, pointing down in the direction of your toes.

STEP #2

Relax your abdominal muscles and lift your head. You might have to come up and down a few times so you can feel how the muscles work. You are trying to feel the two ridges of the muscles straight down your midline feeling for a gap. If you don't feel a gap (separation) with 2 fingers, you may have to put more fingers in the gap to feel a ridge either side. If you see the football-like ridge you should start by using 4 to 5 fingers.

Do YOU feel a gap GREATER THAN 3 FINGERS wide?

Closing a Diastasis is all about healing the connective tissue and exercising correctly. How long it takes depends on the severity of your Diastasis. If you find you have a gap wider than 2 fingers then wait a week and try again. Keep trying and if it is still present 6 weeks after birth go and see your midwife or GP. Keep a close eye on the gap during this programme and document the changes.

Diastasis Recti Printable Diagram



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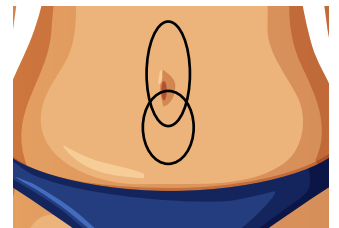
Print and recheck every 4 weeks.
Draw a circle(s) around where you can feel the gap, be as accurate as you are able for future reference.

How large is the gap?
Measure in fingers.

Note any symptoms you are having such as back ache, incontinence, shortness of breath, pain, pelvic floor control. Write what ever you feel and notice.



Example



MAY

SUNDAY

APRIL

SUNDAY

MONDAY

MARCH

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

3

4



Your Journal

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Welcome to module 1

Week 1

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Here we add your part - to get moving. Always start your week on the same day for consistency and ease to follow. Complete the schedule crossing the circle each time you complete it once. Anything extra you do write it down in the free space. Keep all exercises slow and controlled using 'Exhale on Effort' with your breath. Follow the online videos and as you get more confident using the printable cheat sheets (make sure you are confident first). Aim for 12 of each exercise (repeat 3 times if time allows). Never skip the breathing section as the breath is key! Move on from each week only when you feel ready. GO FOR IT!!!!

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Ball / Pillow

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeeze app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1 // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Watch welcome video
- Check for Diastasis Recti and fill in the diagram
- Fill in health questionnaire
- Take a before photo
- Watch neutral pelvis video



Module 1

Week 2

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Remember to cross the circle each time you complete it. Your journey is moving forward and each week we introduce new videos and exercises. Keep familiar with the previous weeks exercises too.

Remember to keep moving and walk every day, aiming for 30 minutes. If you miss something out don't feel deflated, get back on track the next day for consistency.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Ball / Pillow

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeeze app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 2 // COMPLETE 5 TIMES



CORE 2 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Read back over the hydration section and check you are drinking enough
- Watch the balloon practical video
- Go to <https://www.squeezeapp.com> and watch some more of the videos



Module 1

Week 3

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Each week we introduce something new and this week we introduce Core 3. Keep repeating and revisiting existing classes even though we begin to move forward. Remember if you find anything too challenging for you just now leave it and repeat last week until you feel stronger. It is fine to repeat a week 2 or 3 times and important you feel comfortable before you move to the next week. Your daily walk can be anything from 30 minutes. Aim to get in a routine with this around your baby / pets, taking the buggy and if it is around nap time your baby may nap. Some sort of routine (depending on your baby's age) can be useful for both of you.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Ball / Pillow
- Band

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeeze app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES



CORE 2 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES



CORE 3 // COMPLETE ONCE



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Take the meditation class
- Go to <https://www.squeezeapp.com> and watch some more of the videos or refresh your mind



Module 1

Week 4

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This is our last week of Module 1 and you will have completed all of the Core classes now - you may even be beginning to notice small changes. Ensure that you are familiar with the classes. Remember this is a journey and it takes time to build strength and heal, consistency is where changes will happen. The Core classes will be repeated as we move forward to Module 2 although they will reduce as we introduce Movement classes. If entering the next module feels too intense then repeat week 4 as many times as you need to. Keep up with your pelvic floor exercises and your daily walks. WELL DONE!!!

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Ball / Pillow
- Band

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeezezy app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1 // COMPLETE ONCE



CORE 2 // COMPLETE ONCE



CORE 3 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES



CORE 4 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK - complete at THE END of this week:

- Check your Diastasis Recti and fill in the diagram
- Fill in health questionnaire again
- Take a module 2 photo. Wear the same clothes and take from the same angle as week 1
- Watch and do the warm up and cool down videos



Welcome to module 2

Week 5

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Welcome to Module 2. We introduce Movement classes and add more sessions in, making 9 sessions per week (that is only 2 more and you can do your Core and Movement together). Core first then movement, stick with the breath and don't skip the core section - it is crucial you stick with it throughout even when you start to feel stronger.

Wear decent trainers and drink water frequently. Plan out your week so you don't feel overwhelmed with the extra sessions, by having a plan in place you are much more likely to succeed. Always do your warm up video and cool down.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeezezy app

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

CORE 2 // ONCE

- 1

CORE 3 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES

- 1
- 2

CORE 4 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES

- 1
- 2
- 3

MOVEMENT 1 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES

- 1
- 2
- 3

EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Watch Movement Welcome video
- Watch the Exhale on Effort video
- Make sure you do the Warm up and Cool Down video before Movement



Module 2

Week 6

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Well done on your first week of movement. As the core sessions reduce and your movement increases we work on building strength for you to cope as your baby gets heavier. We create strength and movement patterns to get you ready to be able to chase your crawling baby. Lift your baby safely by squatting down and keeping your back straight, avoid picking them up with a rounded back to avoid injury and pain. Always do your warm up video and cool down before and after each movement class.

As you begin to feel stronger and ready to move more always listen to any signals of pain or discomfort.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes
- Ball / Pillow
- A Balloon
- Hand weights

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeeze app

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

CORE 3 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES

- 1
- 2

CORE 4 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES

- 1
- 2

MOVEMENT 1 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES

- 1
- 2
- 3

MOVEMENT 2 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES

- 1
- 2

EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Try and add some time in for meditation
- Watch the balloon practical video again
- Go to <https://www.squeezeapp.com> and watch some more of the videos or refresh your mind

Module 2

Week 7

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Look at how far you have come, you are over half way through the programme now. Keep going. Aim to drink more water and less caffeine. Caffeine can irritate your bladder so coca cola, coffee, tea and chocolate can all make you feel you need to urinate. Even when you feel tired after lack of sleep opt for exercise and water to give you energy.

If you are breastfeeding, check in that you are eating enough calories, wholefoods and fruit and veg. Remember now is not a time to restrict calories or your milk may not be produced to your baby's requirements.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeezezy app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 2 // ONCE



CORE 3 // ONCE



CORE 4 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



MOVEMENT 2 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES



MOVEMENT 3 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Take the meditation class
- Find some you time to try and relax, read a book, take a bath or go for a walk alone
- Re address the hydration page to check you are drinking enough



Module 2

Week 8

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Our last week of Module 2 and now you have completed all the classes.

At the end of this week it will be another check in for Diastasis, health questionnaire and new photo.

Well done and keep going, you are doing great.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use the online class or NHS squeezezy app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 3 // ONCE

CORE 4 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES

MOVEMENT 2 // ONCE



MOVEMENT 3 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES

MOVEMENT 4 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK - complete at THE END of this week:

- Check your Diastasis Recti and fill in the diagram
- Fill in health questionnaire again
- Take a module 3 photo. Wear the same clothes and take from the same angle as week 1 & 5



Welcome to Module 3

Week 9

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Congratulations for beginning your last module. You should begin to notice changes now in how you feel. Keep your hydration, nutrition, and protein rich food up to aid recovery and build strength. By keeping up with your breathing and core classes you are helping your pelvic floor function correctly when you exercise. You are training your body to have a new muscle memory and for your pelvic floor, breath and movement to function correctly together.

For the core classes pick and mix them up, completing AT LEAST 3 times. Make sure you mix them up still.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use NHS app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 3+ TIMES



MOVEMENT 3 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



MOVEMENT 4 // COMPLETE 3 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Watch the Exhale on Effort video again
- Take the meditation class
- Check in with the 10 tips for being strong on the inside page



Module 3

Week 10

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You are almost at the end of this programme now with just a few weeks to go. This is where changes really happen - make sure even though you are feeling stronger keep going as with the wrong type of exercise you could undo all your previous hard work. Remember we are setting the foundations for being strong on the inside. You are doing great.

Keep your hydration and diet in check. Lay off the sugary drinks and caffeine even when you think you may need them to get you through a bad night. Your body will release endorphins when you exercise and give you more natural energy.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes
- Ball / Pillow
- A Balloon
- Hand weights

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use NHS app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 3+ TIMES



M'MENT 1 // ONCE



M'MENT 2 // ONCE



M'MENT 3 // ONCE



M'MENT 4 // COMPLETE 2 TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Watch the balloon practical video again
- Go to <https://www.squeezyapp.com> and watch some more of the videos or refresh your mind

Module 3

Week 11

DATE COMMENCING - _____



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Two more weeks to go. You have now completed all the movement sections and are free to mix up which ones you do. Maintain variety so you don't get complacent.

Repeat this week as many times as you want to.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use NHS app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 3+ TIMES



MOVEMENT 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 5+ TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK:

- Take the meditation class
- Begin to research a Pilates class to join to avoid having a time gap on completing this programme. Ask me about my virtual classes.



Module 3

Week 12

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You have made it to your final week and should feel stronger, have much more energy in yourself and feel ready to be able to handle chasing after your moving baby/toddler. You should have the strength to be able to act quickly when your child is in danger without injuring yourself. This is the start of your journey and after you have completed this week you could try some gentle impact such as a jog. Remember to wear a good bra! As with any exercise, start slow to condition your body to the impact. Couch to 5K is a good way to do this and even though you may feel you can go further build up slow for avoidance of injury.

Your Journal

EQUIPMENT THIS WEEK:

- Pilates or Yoga mat
- Band
- Hand weights
- Ball / Pillow
- Trainers
- Water to drink in movement classes

YOUR SCHEDULE:

PELVIC FLOOR // COMPLETE 7 TIMES // Use NHS app



Note any symptoms you are having and how the exercises felt.

DAILY WALK // COMPLETE 7 TIMES



CORE 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 3+ TIMES



MOVEMENT 1, 2, 3, 4 // COMPLETE 5+ TIMES



EXTRAS THIS WEEK - complete at THE END of this week:

- Check your Diastasis Recti and fill in the diagram / compare to week 1
- Fill in health questionnaire again / compare to week 1
- Take an end of programme photo. Wear the same clothes and take from the same angle as week 1 & 5 / compare to week 1



CONGRATULATIONS

Well done for completing this programme.

You should feel stronger and in more control of your body.

WHAT NEXT

Join a regular Pilates class to keep your core strength up. Tell your teacher about this programme and I would be happy to speak to your new teacher to discuss what we have covered.

Begin to go back to your pre pregnancy exercise routine 'slowly' looking out for signals of any injuries appearing or any pain stop.

GET YOUR CERTIFICATE

Contact me to receive your certificate and tell me you have completed the course.

I would love to hear how you have got on and maybe see you in class.

You should feel very proud of yourself for all your hard work and dedication.

Bunny x:)



Exercise Cheat Sheets

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Pelvic Floor Strength & Release Exercises



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Practice these exercises daily (or at least 3 times a week) to keep your Pelvic Floor strong and functional. It is just as important to release and relax your PF as well as learning how to engage and strengthen.

To engage your pelvic floor think about your pubic bone and coccyx reaching each other. Engage into your urethra, vagina and rectum in equal resistance. Practice engaging when you are lifting heavy objects or children to support your core, you should activate correctly at about 30%.

Perform 5-10 sets/contractions of each exercise. Practice in different positions, lying, side lying, standing and sitting. It is the quality of the contraction that counts and make sure you don't hold your breath.

The Elevator

Aim

To isolate and engage the deep stabilising muscles of the pelvis and pelvic floor.

Method

Take a good breath into your upper back and sides keeping your spine long. Draw your pubic bone to coccyx, lifting them together and up. Take the pelvic lift to floor 1, floor 2 and floor 3 then back down to each floor in turn finishing at the ground floor.

Be careful not to recruit your surface tummy muscles as you reach floor 3 and no buttocks or shoulders.



The Emergency Stop

Aim

Stress incontinence is surprisingly common. This exercise will help you cope with jumping, sneezing and coughing.

Method

Lift the whole of the pelvic floor, engaging quickly as if it was

a coping mechanism to deal with a sneeze. Hold for 1-5 seconds and release. Keep breathing and repeat making sure you release and relax in-between.

The Flower

Aim

To strengthen and relax.

Method

Gradually draw PF up and in through your vagina, visualise a flower as the petals close. Now as you slowly release the muscles, let them open like the petals of a flower. Concentrate on your vagina for this one.

Pelvic Floor Release

Hold fire on this one until 6 week check to make sure you are strong enough first. Once you gain control of your bladder and pelvic floor you can learn to release to avoid an over worked PF.

Aim

To strengthen and learn how to relax.

Method

When working on the Elevator exercise and the lift comes down to ground take the lift down to the basement then back to ground. Make the exercise a gentle release and not a 'push' or a 'bear down' feeling.

A useful reminder is to download 'Squeezy' - the NHS pelvic floor app

Pelvic floor exercises are for life, you only have one! Vary your positions from laying, sitting, standing. Never hold yourself when urinating. Make time for your pelvic floor exercises and invest in yourself and your body. Learn to relax the pelvic floor as this is just as important as strength. This app can help with daily reminders on your phone.





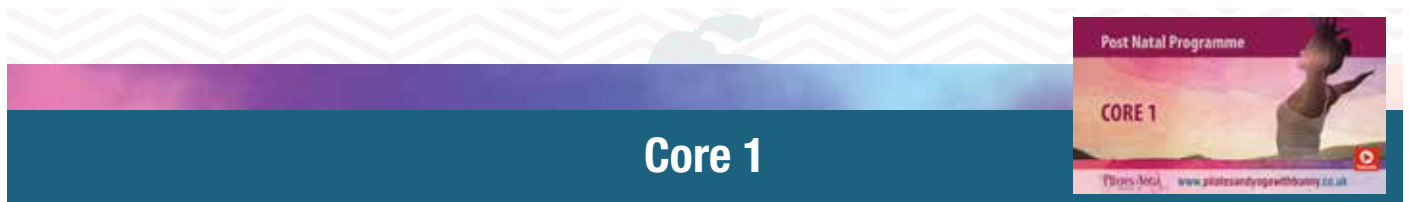
Exercise Cheat Sheet

Core

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Always watch the video and when you feel competent with this set of exercises use this sheet for reference. Always work on exhale for effort and work on the breath.

Return to the video at any time to repeat to check you are not skipping stages or cues.



1 BREATHE WORK



2 CAT / BREATHE



3 BALL SQUEEZE



4 SINGLE KNEE FOLDS



5 KNEE DROPS



6 SINGLE LEG SLIDE





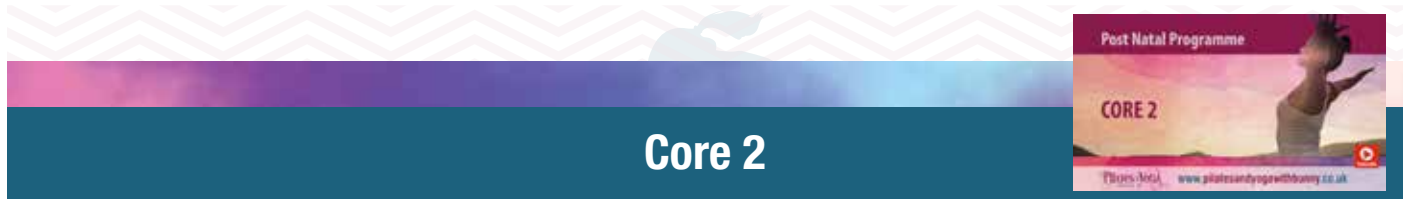
Exercise Cheat Sheet

Core

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1 BREATHE WORK



2 HIP ROLLS



3 PELVIC TILT / SPINE CURL



4 BRIDGE WITH SMALL BALL



5 SIDE LEG RAISES



6 REST POSITION





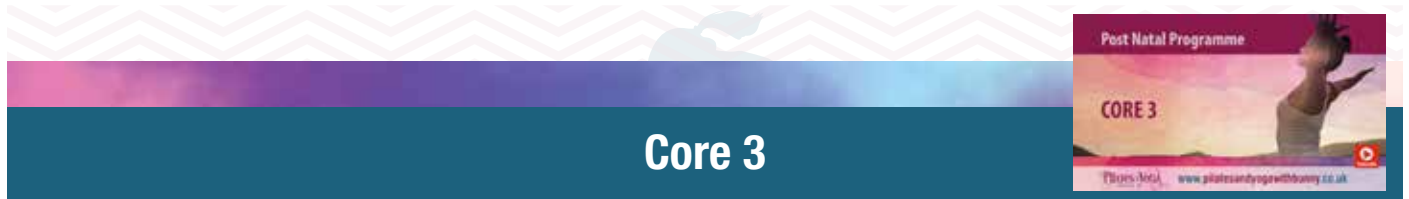
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1 BREATHE WORK



2 DOUBLE KNEE FOLD



3 BRIDGE BAND OPEN / CLOSE



4 BRIDGE BAND OPEN / CLOSE



5 KNEELING TRICEP PRESS UPS



6 SUPERMAN





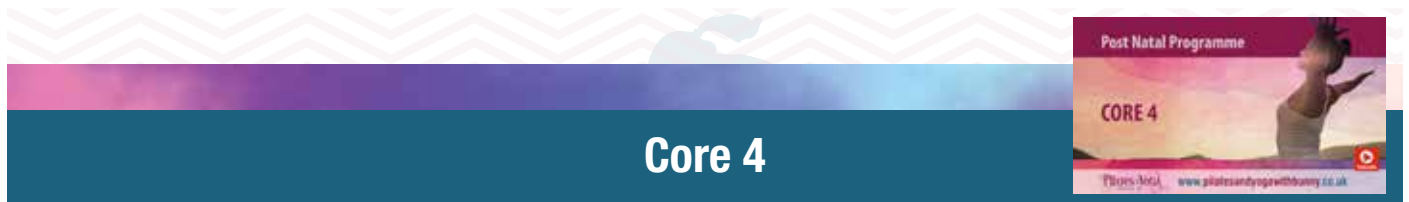
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1 BREATHE WORK



2 DYING BUG



3 SEMI SUPINE LEG SLIDE



4 OYSTER



5 INCH WORM / DOWN DOG WALK



6 BANDED SIDE WALKS





Exercise Cheat Sheet

Movement

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Return to the video at any time to repeat to check you are not skipping stages or cues.

Watch your warm up video and cool down video each time you exercise.



Movement 1

1 STANDING SINGLE KNEE FOLD



2 SQUAT AND PRESS



3 HIP HINGE



4 LUNGE PULSE



5 SEATED BACK ROW



6 MERMAID





Exercise Cheat Sheet

Movement

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1 ARM CIRCLES



2 BAND SWINGS



3 STANDING TORPEDO



4 SQUAT AND PULL



5 REAR LUNGE



6 BOW AND ARROW





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Movement

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Movement 3

1 STANDING KNEE TO ELBOW



2 HALF MOON BALANCE



3 CURTSEY LUNGE



4 INCH WORM WALKS



5 SINGLE LEG TAPS



6 CAT / COW





Exercise Cheat Sheet

Movement

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Movement 4

1 SINGLE LEG HINGE



2 SIDE LUNGE HINGE



3 SQUAT TWIST AND REACH



4 RUNNERS LUNGE TAPS



5 KNEELING PRESS UP



6 HIP ROLL



Pelvic Floor and Diastasis Recti Exercises



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“The pelvic floor is like a rudder of a ship – if it only works in one direction it will pull one side. Keep the rudder strong and centred” Unknown

Use these exercises as an extra to keep things varied. Control working through your core synergy breath and recruit your lower internal tummy muscles. Always keep your pelvis in neutral and learn to relax. Aim for 6-8 of each exercise.

All exercises are undertaken at your own risk and are extra to the home programme.

Breathing

Expansion – the inhale – Diaphragm descends, PF relaxes, rib-cage expands, abdominal wall relaxes and expands. The Core is being LOADED! Eccentric phase (easy phase).

Compression – the exhale – Diaphragm ascends, PF tensions, rib-cage contracts, abdominal wall tensions, lumbar and thoracic muscles and other soft tissue contracts/ tensions to support. The core is being UNLOADED! Concentric phase.

Exercises

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Semi supine exhale and PF engagement | 6. Semi supine core stability – weight reach over head |
| 2. Semi supine pelvic tilt | 7. Oyster |
| 3. Bridge lift | 8. Cat and cow |
| 4. Hip rolls | 9. Wall squat |
| 5. Semi supine single knee drops | 10. Supported standing knee raise |

1. Semi supine exhale and PF engagement

Lie on your back with knees bent, gently contract lower abdominals and pelvic floor (think jelly fish or compass north to south). Hold for 5 seconds and continue to breathe. Make sure you relax PF between each one.



2. Semi supine pelvic tilt

As exercise 1, add a pelvic tilt (if you have any lower back pain STOP). Slowly flatten your back into the mat by tilting your pelvis, allow your tummy to scoop down to the mat.



3. Bridge lift

Starting as exercise 1, engage lower tummy, use bottom cheeks and lift up to the ceiling. Keep a good line between your shoulders, hips and knees. Any pressure anywhere on your neck etc STOP.



Pelvic Floor and Diastasis Recti Exercises (cont)

1. Hip Rolls

Starting as exercise 1, engage lower tummy and pelvic floor and slowly roll knees and hips to one side - half way to floor. Bring back to centre and repeat the other side. Keep your upper back glued to the mat and knees and ankles together. One foot will lift as you keep knees and ankles locked.

2. Semi supine single knee drops

Starting as exercise 1, engage lower tummy and pelvic floor and slowly open one knee to the side - half way to floor. Bring back to centre and repeat the other side. Keep your pelvis completely still and work only from the hip socket.

3. Semi supine core stability – weight reach over head

Starting as exercise 1, engage lower tummy and pelvic floor, keep your pelvis in neutral and your ribs down. Bring your arms up to the ceiling holding a light weight, with no movement from the body slowly lower the weight in a controlled manner over your head half way to mat. Avoid bringing ribs up. You can use a small bottle of water or a can of beans. If a weight makes you move through your body then start without the weight and progress when you can keep your body still.

4. Oyster

Lay onto your side with your shoulders, hips and ribs stacked on top of each other. Knees bent in front and heels together in-line with your bottom. Keeping the hips still open the top knee slightly and lower. Swap sides after you have done 6-8.

5. Cat and cow

Into 4 point kneeling, hands under shoulders, knees under hips, back flat. Engage lower tummy muscles and tilt your pelvis and arch your back. Think about how a cat stretches. Then come through the starting position and come back the other way to stretch through your tummy. Avoid pushing the neck back too far.

6. Wall squat

Stand with your back against a wall, feet 30cm (approx) away from the wall. Heels need to remain under your knees. Slide your back down the wall and hold for count of 2 and then use bottom and pelvic floor to push you up. Make sure your knees don't feel any pressure and keep the knees over heels. Go down no lower than 90°. Use core strength rather than leaning against the wall.

7. Supported standing knee raise

Holding onto the back of a chair for support, engage lower tummy muscles and pelvic floor. Keep your hips level and lift one knee up in front of you to hip level and lower down. Avoid arching through your back and just work from the hip so your pelvis remains stable. Work on one side first and then swap sides.





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