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We include products we think are useful for our readers. If you buy through links on this page, we may earn a small commission. Here's our process.**Guidelines/Benefits/Exercises/Sample workout/Considerations/Takeaway/Share on Pinterest/Whether this is your first, second, or fourth trip around the postpartum block, there's a good chance your post-baby body feels a lot different than your pre-pregnancy self (you did just birth a human, after all). But if you're eager to get moving, you might be wondering when it's safe to return to exercise and what types of workouts are best in the first few weeks and months after childbirth. While your pregnancy, type of birth, and any complications you experienced during delivery will dictate specific exercise guidelines, the most important factor to consider is how you feel. That's because easing into any type of workout after giving birth is key to both the long-term success of your fitness plan and your overall health. In other words, try to be patient and realistic about what you're capable of doing. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the type of pregnancy and delivery you had are the primary considerations for deciding a start date for fitness. In general, if you had a healthy pregnancy and delivery, you can start working out when you feel ready. For some women, this may be as soon as a week after giving birth. (But it's OK — and perfectly normal — if you need longer!) If you had a cesarean delivery or other complications such as diastasis recti or severe vaginal tears, you'll need to work with your doctor to determine a timeline for when it's safe to begin exercise again. In general, you'll need to wait several weeks to return to an exercise program — so enjoy some guilt-free rest, recovery, and... relaxation? (As usual, as is possible with a newborn, that is!) When you do head back to the gym or hit the trails for a walk, aim to stay active by engaging in low-impact aerobic activity for 20 to 30 minutes a day. Add on 10 minutes of simple postpartum exercises that help strengthen your abdominal muscles and other major muscle groups such as your legs, glutes, and back. If 20 minutes is too much, scale back to 10 to 15 minutes, two times a day. For example, go for a 15-minute walk in the morning, followed by 10 minutes of gentle yoga or abdominal strengthening exercises at night. You can add time or intensity as you get stronger and your body feels better. Exercise, at any point in your life, is one of the best ways to improve your mood, strength and tone muscles, and increase overall health. But during the postpartum period specifically, fitness has the potential to strengthen and tone abdominal muscles that were stretched during pregnancy, boost your energy, promote better sleep, relieve stress, help you lose any extra weight you gained, and moderate intensity aerobic exercise (such as walking) during the postpartum period also has the ability to improve mild to moderate depressive symptoms, according to a 2017 review of studies. The primary goal in the postpartum period is to move your body and do movements that make you feel good. That said, there is one area that needs a little extra TLC, according to Roselyn Reilly, facility leader and trainer at Fit Body Boot Camp of Berkley, Michigan. "The most important thing in the postpartum period is getting core strength back," says Reilly. She recommends focusing on the diaphragm, transverse abdominis muscles, and the pelvic floor. "Cardio is fine, but I would keep it to lighter cardio and really focus on rebuilding the core strength," she adds. To whip your core back into shape, Reilly recommends starting with these five moves: Swiss bird dog holds, Cat-Cow in tabletop, Swiss ball glute bridge, postpartum plank, and side plank. If you followed your doctor's instructions during pregnancy, there's a good chance your body already knows how to do a Kegel. Continuing these exercises during the postpartum period can help you strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles (the ones used to stop the flow of urination). Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat throughout the day. Diaphragmatic or deep breathing is an exercise you can begin within the first few days of giving birth. Taking a few minutes each day to focus on your breath can help you relax and reduce stress. It can also improve core stability and slow your rate of breathing. You can perform this breathing exercise seated or lying down. Lie flat on the floor on a yoga mat. Relax your body, focusing on releasing the tension from your toes to the top of your head. Put a hand on your chest and another on your stomach. Take a deep breath through the nose. This will expand your stomach, but your chest should remain relatively still. Breathe in for 2 to 3 seconds, then slowly exhale through the mouth and on the chest. Repeat one or two times. Repeat several times for 2 to 3 minutes. The first few months after delivery is an excellent time to test-drive that new jogging stroller your BFF handed down to you. Walking, while pushing a newborn, will give your body an amazing workout, especially if you can find a route with some hills (hello, glute muscles). As you get stronger, consider stopping every 10 to 15 minutes and performing a few bodyweight squats. If the weather is nice, take your baby out of the stroller and hold them in front of you while squatting. The extra resistance will really give your backside a boost, and your little one will love the face-to-face time. This exercise helps with stability, posture, and reduces low back pain, which is pretty darn common after giving birth. You'll need a stability or exercise ball (shop online for one here) to perform this move. Lay down on top of the ball, so that your torso covers the ball. Your body will be in a straight line, with your palms flat on the floor and toes touching the ground. Looking down at the floor, lift and reach your left foot and right arm at the same time. Hold for 1 to 2 seconds. Return to the starting position and change sides. Alternate sides for 20 total repetitions. The Cat-Cow stretch is a beginner yoga move that helps to support back muscles, strengthens the core, and promotes mobility in the spine. Including this move in your postpartum workouts can help reduce back pain, promote relaxation, and improve circulation. Get on the floor on all fours. Keep your back flat, spine neutral, and gaze looking down at the floor. Your wrists will be directly under your shoulders and knees under hips. Inhale and take a deep breath. On the exhale, round your spine toward the ceiling. Your head and tailbone will move closer to each other. Hold in the cat position for 1 to 2 seconds. Then, inhale, arch your back, and lift your tailbone and gaze toward the sky as you relax your belly to the floor to move to the cow position. Do this continuously for about 60 seconds. Reilly says the Swiss ball glute bridge exercise is great for pelvic floor and core stabilization. It works the abdominal muscles, glutes, quadriceps, and hamstrings. You will need a stability or exercise ball to perform this move. Start with your back flat on the ground, knees bent, and stability ball by your feet. Place your feet flat on the ball, press through the heels, and raise your hips into the air. Use your glute and hamstring muscles to assist. Your shoulders and upper back will remain in contact with the floor, and your body should be in a straight line. Hold at the top for a few seconds and return to the starting position while keeping the ball still. Perform 3 to 4 sets, 10 to 20 repetitions each set. The standard plank is an excellent total body exercise that retrains the core, strengthens the muscles in your upper body, and gives your glutes a nice lift. You can perform a standard plank within the first few weeks of giving birth, as long as you had a vaginal delivery without complications. If you need to modify this move, Reilly says to start on your knees before doing a full standard plank. Lie on your stomach with your forearms on the floor and elbows beneath shoulders. Your feet will be flexed with toes on the floor. Engage your glutes and core and rise up on your toes so that only your forearms and toes touch the floor. Your body should be a few inches off the floor in a straight line. Contracting your deep abdominal muscles, bring your belly button to spine, and tighten your buttocks and upper body. Breathe normally and hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 1 to 2 times. As you get stronger, increase the hold time. The side plank leg lift is a variation of the standard plank. It's more advanced, so you may want to save this move for 6 to 8 weeks postpartum. This exercise will work your glutes, obliques, and to a lesser degree, the shoulder muscles. Lie on your stomach with your forearms on the floor and elbows beneath shoulders. Your feet will be flexed with toes on the floor. Go on one forearm and turn sideways. Raise your top leg and hold it in the air for 20 to 30 seconds or repeatedly perform leg raises until the time is up. Perform 1 to 2 sets on each side. 30-minute stroller walk followed by the five core exercises listed above. (You can do diaphragmatic breathing and Kegels daily.) Functional training workout below. Once you hit the 12-week mark, you can substitute the Tabata-style workout (below) for one of the functional training workouts. Remember, the early stages of postnatal exercise. That way, you can see any patterns or areas of concern that you may need to share with your doctor. Some red flags to be aware of during this time include: vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain, discomfort in your pelvic region, exercise is causing you pain or bleeding, talk with your doctor right away. In addition to an office visit, they may recommend modifications such as decreasing the intensity and duration of the activity. Including exercise in the postpartum period can help strengthen your core muscles, boost your mood, reduce stress, and prevent low-back injuries. It also gives you time to focus on you, which is a rarity during motherhood. Our motto? Take care of you so you can take care of them. Parenthood Postpartum Care PDF#10318 Published: January 2022 Last revised: May 2024 Copyright 2025 by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. All rights reserved. Read copyright and permissions information. This information is designed as an educational aid for the public. It offers current information and opinions related to women's health. It is not intended as a statement of the standard of care. It does not explain all of the proper treatments or methods of care. It is not a substitute for the advice of a physician. Read ACOG's complete disclaimer. Ok, so you've survived the first six weeks! Around about now, you'll head back to your doctor to check that everything is healing well, and all being well, you'll get the all clear to get back into some gentle exercise. Low impact exercise is the best option at this time, to allow your body to continue to gently heal, and ease back into it. Your goal should be to get moving, gently and safely. This is a time for gently working muscles that may have become stretched and weakened during pregnancy. The focus now is on gently working your pelvic floor muscles, and tummy muscles. Walking with the best option is great, so your baby comes with you, and gentle workouts at home like the 28 by Sam Wood postnatal program are ideal, so you can fit them in whenever it suits you best. Babies are unpredictable, so it often makes it tricky to get along to the gym at a set time. And babies seem to take five minutes out of your day. The TIME is the early days, making it tricky to go. Remember, if you have any pain, or a feeling of heaviness in the vagina or bottom, or any other concerns, stop exercising and talk with your doctor. RELATED: 5 Tips For Strengthening Your Pelvic Floor Post-Baby Top 5 exercises at 6 weeks postnatal Walking for 30 minutes daily Pelvic floor exercises - Aim for 5 x 5 second holds, 3 times a day. I used to do my squeezes every time I fed my baby, that way I just got into the habit of doing them, otherwise it's too easy to forget! Deep Tummy muscle activation - Pull your lower tummy in, engaging your deep tummy muscles, and keep them pulled in for 3 breaths. Then release. Do 5 repetitions. Do these after doing your pelvic floor exercises, to help your abdominal muscles safely tighten up and strengthen. Squats - Bust out 20 great squats when you are changing your baby's nappy. This helps to get your legs and glutes fired up. You need strong legs to manage all the lifting that you'll be doing. Having strong legs means you're less likely to overuse or strain your back. My babies loved being cuddled while I did squats, they loved the up and down bouncy feeling and it often sent them off to sleep. Multitasking! Up or bench push ups - Pump out 15 bench push ups after you brush your teeth, so you'll be getting it done without thinking. Top 5 exercises at 8 weeks postnatal You can gradually start to increase your cardio from now, maintaining low impact moves to avoid too much pressure on your recovering pelvic floor and tummy muscles. Walking - Up the intensity by going a little faster, or add in some hills. This will get your heart rate up and get the endorphins flowing. Cat / Cow stretch - On all fours, round through your shoulders and tuck your chin to your chest, tuck your tailbone under and stretch your chest. Then slowly reverse, looking up and gently arching your back. Do this 4 or 5 times, or more if it's feeling good! Cal raises - Rise up onto the balls of your feet, squeezing your glutes and ankles, and hold for 10 seconds. This is a great exercise for strengthening all the muscles in your ankles and feet. Superman - Lie on your stomach, with your arms and legs extended. Lift your chest and arms, and hold for 10 seconds. This is a great exercise for strengthening your back and core. RELATED: 5 Tips For Healing After Childbirth RELATED: 5 Tips To Reduce Postnatal Continence Twelve weeks is a significant turning point in your recovery. Often you start to feel stronger now, and you are getting into some kind of rhythm / routine with your baby, so you can plan your day a little more. Walk / jog - Around now you can start to add in some higher intensity exercise (if you feel like it!) Start gradually, adding in short bursts of jogging every few minutes on your walk, or crank up the intensity Modified plank - A great exercise to strengthen your core. Starting on your hands and knees, come down onto your elbows and keep your elbows on the floor, as you step your legs out to straight. Hold for 5 seconds, then rest your knees back on the floor. Lunges - Progress from your squats, and mix it up with some lunges. I like to do a lunge walk down my hallway, alternating legs each side, so you end up doing about 10 on each leg. Hold your baby for added resistance! Side plank - Lying on your side, push up onto your elbow and knees, activating your side waist muscles, your obliques. Hold for 10 seconds, and slowly lower. Keep breathing, and then repeat on the opposite side. When it comes to your postpartum workouts you need to break it down into two phases. The first 12 weeks (or more) after childbirth must be dedicated to recovery and healing. Then when you are ready to lose your baby weight and regain your body confidence with the way you look, you can include appropriate core exercises and cardio. The right program will help you to alleviate back pain, leaky bladder, diastasis recti, and prolapse symptoms. The wrong workouts can cause you more harm and further injury. So please only participate in classes that are being taught by an experienced postpartum exercise specialist. Postnatal Exercise and Intensity as you become stronger and more comfortable. Remember to celebrate your victories along the way and be patient with your progress. It's not about bouncing back to your pre-pregnancy shape. It's about nurturing your body and giving it the care it deserves after the incredible feat of childbirth. Tip for Your Postpartum Workouts 1. Always be guided by your doctor. 2. Be kind to yourself! It's not about aiming for personal bests. It is all about healing and recovering! 3. Communicate with your partner, family and friends your need to find time to exercise. 4. Walking your baby is also a good way to get some exercise and fresh air. 5. You can always have your baby near you as you perform some pelvic floor exercises or a short video workout. 6. Start off slowly and if possible progress to getting 30 minutes a day of activity. 7. Wear an appropriate bra that offers good support. 8. Stop immediately if you experience any pain or discomfort. Always Consult Your Doctor I want you to consult your doctor before starting any exercise program. This is essential as the needs and requirements vary from one person to another. Although there are many benefits to exercising, your current condition may prevent you from doing so now. Results You Can See! Guidelines 1. Always consult your doctor before starting any sort of exercise program. 2. Stay hydrated by drinking water before, during and after exercise. 3. Wear comfortable workout shoes and clothes. 4. Acknowledge your current level of fitness and do not over-exert yourself. 5. If you experience any pain stop immediately and seek medical advice. 6. Only increase the intensity or duration of your workout when you feel you are ready. If you increase the intensity too quickly you will be more susceptible to sustaining and injury. 7. If you have a pre-existing injury speak to your health care professional first about which exercises you should and should not do. Exercise Precautions If you have experienced (or are currently experiencing) any of the following we advise you to consult your doctor first before starting or continuing in an exercise program: 1. You have joint or muscle problems. 2. You have a heart or lung problem. 3. You have severe anaemia (very low iron levels in your blood). 4. You have high blood pressure. 5. You are a heavy smoker. 6. You have a serious lung disease. 7. You have a serious heart disease. 8. You have poorly controlled diabetes. 9. You were very overweight / obese before pregnancy. 10. You were underweight. 11. Certain medical conditions. Your doctor will provide you with guidelines, instructions and recommendations if you have one of these conditions and they believe that you can still exercise. Your Exercise Plan after Pregnancy Your body is experiencing an entire new range of unwanted, and sometimes embarrassing, set of body changes. Your exercise plan should be dedicated to recovery and healing your diastasis. First, I want you to wait at least two weeks postpartum before exercising at all. And if you need longer, then do not feel rushed! As a new mother, you are exhausted, tired and getting used to having to look after your beautiful little baby night and day. You're probably wondering how you are supposed to find the time or energy to exercise. But recovery is about YOU! I created my online program so you don't have to go to the gym. You can workout in the privacy of your own home. Each week I want you to include a gentle 20 minute workout into your schedule. Aim to do this at least three times a week. You can also do a rest and relaxation audio or workout. And when you have some time (in the car, on the couch) I want you to do some Kegel exercises for your pelvic floor. Each week, your workouts should be progressive. You are not trying to set any new personal best times or lifts. It's about doing the right postpartum core exercise to aid in your recovery. Exercise and Breastfeeding Postpartum exercise and breastfeeding is often a topic raised when women start to begin a program after birth and are concerned about what effects exercise may have on breastfeeding. Studies have shown that moderate postpartum exercise during lactation does not affect the quantity or composition of breast milk or infant pain/fat gain. Exercise frequency and intensity should not interfere with your ability to breastfeed. However, it has been reported that lactic acid has been shown to be increased in the breast milk of women exercising at maximal intensity, but not in those exercising at low to moderate levels. Feeding Your Baby If you feel you do not feel as well right after exercising you may want to consider feeding your baby right before exercising or postponing feeding until 1 hour after exercising. Further research and studies are required regarding this topic of exercise and breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, you should consult your doctor before starting any exercise program. You may need a More Intense Fitness Plan The number 1 way to lose baby weight is to eat a gym. 2. No leg weight challenge. Will help you to get a stronger body than what you had before pregnancy. Join PreActive family and like you who have changed their lives for the better! All starts by signing up and making a commitment to the 28 day challenge and joining the PreActive family to get the support and motivation you deserve. Ready to lose weight after pregnancy and become a fit and strong mama? Why Stronger Mama is for You Lose baby weight the right way. Get rid of your belly 'pooch'. Be a fit and strong mama. Feel strong and sexy in your own body. Convenient for busy mamas. Workout anytime, anywhere. Support from our PreActive family. I recommend these Exercises Exercises to Include in Your Program 1. Diaphragmatic breathing Deep breathing is an exercise you can start doing within the first few days after childbirth. Your goal is to focus on your breath can help you relax and reduce stress. This breathing can also improve core stability and slow your rate of breathing. You can perform this breathing exercise seated or lying down. 2. Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels) If you followed my Pregnancy Program during your pregnancy, there's a good chance your body already knows how to do a Kegel. I want you to continuing these exercises during the postpartum period as they will help you strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. 3. Walking Post Pregnancy with Baby You will no doubt find yourself walking daily as you push baby around in their stroller. If you are walking through a park, then why not stop every few hundred meters and do a few bodyweight squats. 4. Cat-Cow in tabletop A favorite yoga pose of mine is the Cat-Cow stretch which is a beginner yoga move that helps to support back muscles and strengthens the core. 5. Swiss ball bird dog holds This exercise on a Swiss ball helps with stability, posture, and reduces low back pain, which is pretty darn common after giving birth. You'll need a stability or exercise ball for this one. 6. Swiss ball glute bridge The Swiss ball glute bridge works the abdominal muscles, glutes, quadriceps, and hamstrings. It will need a stability or exercise ball to perform this move. 7. Side plank Side plank is a great exercise to help you expand with air. Exhale, tucking your chin and rounding your spine. Continue this flow of movement, synchronizing it with your breath. Continue for up to 1 minute. Share on Pinterest GIF by Dima Bazak This exercise targets your core and glutes. To challenge your pelvic floor muscles and encourage alignment, place a small ball, cushion, or yoga block between your knees. Lie on your back with bent knees, pressing your feet into the floor. Slowly raise your hips. Pause for a few breaths. Lower to the starting position. Do 2 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions. Share on Pinterest GIF by Dima Bazak Reverse lunges strengthen your glutes, hamstrings, and quadriceps, which improves balance and stability. To enhance stability, place your hands on the wall or the back of a chair. As your strength increases, use a kettlebell or dumbbells to increase resistance. Stand with your feet directly under your hips. Step your right foot back. Lower your body until both knees are at a 90-degree angle. Push through your back heel to return to the starting position. Repeat on the left side. This is 1 repetition. Do 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions. Share on Pinterest GIF by Dima Bazak The bird dog exercise improves stability and core strength. To add an extra challenge, you can use resistance bands. Place one end under your hand and the other under your opposite foot. Start in the tabletop position, gazing down at the floor or slightly ahead. Engage your core muscles to maintain stability. Extend your right arm forward and left leg backward. Pause for a few breaths before lowering back down to the starting position. Repeat on the opposite side. This is 1 repetition. Do 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions. Share on Pinterest GIF by Active Body. Creative Mind To intensify this exercise, incorporate leg lifts. Begin in a high plank. Move your left hand in toward the center. Transfer your weight onto your left hand, stack your ankles, and raise your hips. Rest your right hand on your hip or raise it toward the ceiling. For extra stability, lower your left knee down to the floor. Engage your abdominals, side muscles, and glutes. Keep your feet on the floor. Repeat on the right side. This is 1 repetition. Do 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions. Share on Pinterest GIF by Active Body. Creative Mind To intensify this exercise, incorporate leg lifts. 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