



Cesarean Birth Recovery Guidelines

Important information about your surgery:

1. You have incisions that effect skin, muscle, and uterus (and other organs).
2. Your rectus abdominis muscle (the six pack muscle) was split, and an incision was made in the transversus abdominis muscle. Healing of this split and incision is essential for long term recovery. Sometimes the rectus muscle is “tacked” back together & it is still important to rehab.
3. It is important to follow the lifting instructions set by your physician and PT to protect your split and incision.

Mobility *Blow while you go!

1. Log Roll: When lying down in bed, remember to lie on your side first and then roll to your back. Reverse for out of bed. Remember to exhale!
2. Getting out of a chair: Do your lower abdominal drawing inward/pelvic floor contractions and exhale while you stand.
3. Picking up your baby: Do your lower abdominal drawing inward/pelvic floor contractions and exhale while you lift.
4. Breastfeeding positioning: Try the side lying approach with a pillow between your knees, a pillow behind your back for support, and your bottom arm under your head. The less work you do, the better. Avoid doing a lot of nursing while sitting or reclined because it stresses your rectus split. If you are having latching problems, consult a CLC from the resource guide.

Incision Care

1. Ice 2-3 times per day for 20 minutes for a few weeks. Use a towel around the ice.
2. Keep incision dry in order to decrease risk of infection.
3. Do tiny circles with light pressure about 2-4 inches from the incision site for the first 6 weeks. Spend some time lying flat. This is helpful if you have noticed that you spend most of your time with the head of your bed at a slight incline or you are in a recliner a lot. This will keep your skin used to being stretched so you can stand without pain in your incision.
4. Avoid underwear or tight pants that can irritate your incision or keep it from closing correctly.
5. If swelling continues, you have persistent adhesions, or have pain, a physical therapist can help.
6. At your 6 week PT appointment, the PT will go over what to do next.

Exercise

1. Exercise is best when managed by your PT to keep track of your blood pressure and to make



sure that you are safe during the first part of the post-partum period.

2. Follow the guidelines for starting your exercise program day one in the section and videos by Inspired Maternity's Dr. Ashley below.
3. Consider relaxing with your baby for about 2 weeks! This helps decrease your chance of developing prolapse, helps you heal, and helps you to establish a breastfeeding relationship.
4. At your 6 week PT appointment, they will go over what to do next.

Body Changes After Pregnancy – Recovery to normal:

The three main components of postpartum recovery are: recovery of proper breathing, muscle function, and organ position. It took your baby 9 months to grow, and you 9 months to change with your baby. It will also take time to recover.

During your recovery process, exercise should focus on re-establishing proper core strength (belly, kegel muscles) and breathing mechanics.

Ribs: Your rib cage increased by about 10-15 cm around. In order to avoid rib pain in the postpartum period, you need to retrain your breathing pattern. We also think there is a connection between poor upper rib movement and mastitis. Follow the mastitis prevention protocol to help prevent onset.

Pelvis: Your kegel muscles were preparing to open to allow your baby to come through, so no matter how you delivered your baby your muscles need to help to return to a normal stable state in order to reduce back pain, hip pain, pelvic pain, and urinary/fecal incontinence.

Organ position: Baby filled up a large space in your belly, so now all of your organs need to migrate back to their original position. Organ return can take about 6 weeks. You can help organs return by following our precautions, binding, and restoring your core strength.

Exercise: (refer to Inspired Maternity's 4th Trimester Rehab video series)

1. Deep Breathing ("lower abdominals pull in and upward"): Key in recovering core muscle (Transversus Abdominis), pelvic floor muscles (kegel muscles), and proper breath. 20 times: morning and night and with transitional movements. ***Blow (exhale) as you go!!! (Blow while you move)



2. Kegels: Key in supporting organs and returning pelvic floor muscles to their normal length to improve urine leaking, fecal leaking, and prolapse. Do NOT over-do these pelvic floor contractions. Practice during breathing exercises and transitional movements initially.

*At your 6 week postpartum PT visit, your PT will advance these exercises.

Exercise: Do your breathing exercise as prescribed. This exercise is ESSENTIAL to rib, pelvis, organ, and core recovery.

Things that are “not normal” but can happen – if you experience any of these, please consider seeing a pelvic physical therapist sooner rather than later, i.e.: you can come before your 6 week PT appointment if needed. It is easier to fix these problems now!

1. Pain.
2. Pain with intercourse, bowel movements, urination, sitting, walking, moving in bed, etc.
3. Abdominal pain, hip pain, low back pain, pubic pain, pelvic pain, tailbone pain, thoracic pain,
4. shoulder pain, neck pain.
5. Anything falling out of your vagina or a feeling of heaviness in your vagina.
6. Burning or itching around your vaginal opening or in your pelvis.
7. Sensitive scars.
8. Urine leaking – even a little bit! – Should return to normal within 6 weeks.
9. Fecal leaking/Constipation.
10. A split in your rectus muscles, or a pooch when you move.
11. Something just doesn’t “feel right”.



Prenatal & Postpartum Fitness

References:

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