

## Recovery after a Caesarian (C Section)

Congratulation on your birth! It is important that you look after yourself after your delivery to ensure that you recover your pelvic floor, abdominal and core muscle properly.

During your 9 months of pregnancy, your body has undergone a huge amount of physiological changes including increased blood volume, hormones which make your muscles and ligaments more stretchy, increased weight and pressure on your pelvic floor, abdominal muscles and pelvic organs.



When you have a caesarian birth you most likely had an incision (cut) made across your lower abdominal region. During a caesarian your skin, uterus, fat and fascia (glad wrap which surround the muscles) are cut and then sutured back up together. Your muscles are usually moved out of the way and not cut during the operation.

### How to recover immediately after your caesarian (C section) and for the first 4-6 weeks after birth

#### 1. Rest

- Lots of it! Aim for 30 mins every 2 – 3 hrs, where you lay down and elevate your feet.

#### 2. Start gentle exercise

- Aim for 5-10 minutes of gentle walking day 1 or once you have been allowed to get out of bed and walk around. This helps your circulation and avoid blood clots and promote healing of your tissue.
- As you feel better over the coming days, increase your walking to 10 mins 2-3 times per day. Reduce how often or how long you walk around for if you start to notice an increase in abdominal pain, pain or swelling along your incision.

#### 3. Avoid heavy lifting

- Try to lift nothing more than your newborn baby for the first 6 weeks.

4. Supportive underwear and shorts
  - Wear high waisted undies, shorts or tubigrip to provide extra abdominal support.
  - I generally recommend using any type of recovery shorts after 7-10 days once your wound is more healed and less tender. These shorts can be very compressive and sometimes cause added pain or discomfort.
5. Try placing a pad over your undies horizontally to provide extra padding and protection to your incision site.
6. If you need to cough or sneeze, try using a pillow or towel over your lower abdomen to apply pressure and support your wound
7. Getting in and out of bed, roll to one side and swing your legs off first and push up with your arms, If you sit straight up in bed, you can pull on your staples/sutures which can cause some discomfort.
8. Start your pelvic floor exercises
  - Starting your pelvic floor exercises soon after birth helps to activate your core muscles and will help you to regain your strength and endurance.
  - You can start your pelvic floor exercises as soon as you feel comfortable and can perform a squeeze without any pain or discomfort.

How do I start my pelvic floor exercises?

- Aim for x 10 gentle pelvic floor muscle contractions, which are around 50 percent of your maximal squeeze effort every 2-3 hours during the day.
  - It is normal to feel different when you start your pelvic floor exercises after birth, this is where it comes in useful to have started these exercise prior to birth to help you know what it felt like to squeeze your muscles before birth.
  - Once you feel comfortable and you can start to build on your strength and endurance. See my tips on pelvic floor exercises.
9. Avoid getting constipated and straining
    - Try drinking at least 2L of fluid per day
    - pear or prune juice to keep your bowels soft and easy to pass
  10. Avoid high impact exercise such as running jumping, skipping

## **Your 6 week check!**

It is so important for your long term health of your pelvic floor, abdominal muscles and back to have a 6 week check of your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles. I always tell my clients you only get one pelvic floor, so its better to be proactive than reactive.

Even if you have had a relatively straight forward birth and you have minimal symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction, I highly recommend booking to see a Pelvic Physio to have the muscles assessed and help design you a suitable exercise and rehab recovery program and assess your risks for future pelvic floor issues.

## **Signs and symptoms to watch out for during recovery**

- Urine leakage with cough/sneeze or an urge
- Inability to delay the urge to poo or wee
- Incontinence of the bowels including poo and/or wind
- Vaginal heaviness, aching or a bulging sensation
- Not able to feel or sense your pelvic floor muscles contracting or letting go
- Pain with weeing or pooing

These symptoms can be a sign of pelvic floor dysfunction. If you have any of these symptoms early on, please seek help early. I recommend booking in with your Pregnancy and Pelvic Health Physio as soon as you have any concerns as they can be addressed with a suitable treatment plan to help you recover as quickly as possible.