

Returning to Exercise

Returning to exercise after birth can be an exciting, yet daunting time. Exercise has so many benefits including boost in mood and self-confidence, as well as being an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Many questions often arise about returning to exercise in the post-natal period.

These include:

- Can I run?
- Will I leak wee when I run?
- What exercise can I do?
- Will I be able to get my pre baby fitness back?
- How will I make time to exercise and fit it into my daily schedule
- Do I have a prolapse?
- Can I exercise with a prolapse?



Returning to exercise after birth needs to be a staged rehabilitation and recovery just like you would if you were recovering from knee or ankle injury. Your pelvic floor and core muscles have gone through a huge amount of changes including, stretching, tearing and carrying additional weight.

How and when do I start exercising?

You can start gentle low impact exercise soon after birth as long as you are feeling ok and you have minimal pain, vaginal heaviness or aching.

I recommend starting with walking in the first 6 weeks after birth and commence a 5-10 minute walk 2-3 times per day, building up to 30 minutes of continuous walking 1-2 times per day.

What can I do after 6 weeks?

After 6 weeks, your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles should have healed up enough to commence more strenuous exercise such as stationary bike riding, more vigorous walking, light weight training, post-natal pilates/yoga and core based exercises.

I recommend seeing your Pregnancy and Pelvic Health Physio at 6 weeks, even if you have no symptoms of abdominal separation or pelvic floor dysfunction as you will be able to get a more individualised assessment and exercise program to reach your health and fitness goals sooner.

When can I run, participate in HITT classes or other high impact exercises?

I usually recommend waiting until at least 4-5 months post baby to recommence high impact exercise. Hormonal changes, breastfeeding, muscle, ligament and joint stretching can place

you at higher risk of pelvic floor issues such as prolapse and incontinence as well as soft tissue injuries like knee and ankle sprains.

It is important to start with lower impact exercise first and build your strength, endurance and fitness before you commence the higher impact exercise. It takes someone who has had a knee reconstruction a minimum of 6 months to return to running, jumping or HITT training. Your body grew and birthed a baby over 9 months, it takes at least 9 months to get your fitness back.

If you are keen to return to higher impact exercise earlier, it is useful to consult with a Pregnancy and Pelvic Health Physio to have an individualized assessment. There are always exceptions to the rules and we can assess your risk factors, including pelvic floor strength, endurance and risk of future prolapse and pelvic floor dysfunction.

Signs and symptoms to watch out for during return to exercise

- 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
- Doming or coning of your abdominal
- Persistent back or pelvic girdle pain

What should you do if you develop these symptoms?

See help from your Pregnancy and Pelvic Health Physiotherapist. I can provide you with an individualised assessment and treatment plan to help you achieve your fitness and exercise goals.