

Keeping active and remaining confident post-partum

Other than the changes to your daily routine and sleeping pattern, early motherhood brings significant changes to your physique and level of fitness. Every woman is unique, and the recovery period post-partum (after giving birth) will differ. Once you feel ready and have been advised it's safe to begin introducing activity into your new routine, increase your activity levels gradually to allow your body to adjust.



Start pelvic floor exercises as soon as you can and continue with them daily to support your bladder and pelvic tone. You can train your pelvic muscles whilst you are watching tv, cooking or even when playing with your baby.

The hormone relaxin is produced during pregnancy in order to relax the mother's muscles, joints and ligaments preparing the body for labour. Post-partum, relaxin can remain in your system for up to 5 months and may be slightly longer for breastfeeding mothers. Thus, it is important to be aware of working within a comfortable range of movement with any exercise, particularly any stretching or weight-bearing exercises; to avoid any injury or over stretching.



If you were active before pregnancy, gradually get back into exercise by starting with low-impact exercise such as using a cross-trainer, low intensity dancing or a gentle jog. If you were not active, start gradually by brisk walking with the pram or cycling. Overall, there are many health benefits in undertaking physical activity. It is safe to exercise and be active whilst breastfeeding (unless you have been told otherwise by your healthcare team) but remember to start gently and listen to your body.

Pregnancy and the postpartum period can result in changes in women's body size, and image, and for some that may bring up difficult feelings, such as low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. After giving birth it may take a while for your body to get back to where it was, and you may find it takes more effort and physical requirements to achieve this. Remind yourself of how amazing your body is for the ability to deliver your baby and be proud of that!

After some time, you may look to achieve the Chief Medical Officer's physical guidance of at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week and two days of strengthening activities.

Here are some tips for loving, accepting and being confident in your body:

- 1 Focus on the positive work your body is capable of
- 2 Communicate any worries or concerns you may have to your partner, family, friends, or healthcare support network around you.
- 3 Aim to include regular physical activity in your new routine. Minimal impact exercise such as walking in nature has been shown to improve mood, clear your head and increase happiness
- 4 Start a new hobby or go back to an old one. Engaging in an activity you find positive and enjoyable can be a helpful distraction technique
- 5 Try yoga, mindfulness, or massage for relaxation.
- 6 Seek support. There is no shame and asking for help, if you are struggling speak to your GP or midwife about support that's available and let people you trust know how you feel so they can support you.

Author

Hello, my name is Yoana. I have a BSc in Sport and Exercise Science with Nutrition and MSc in Sport and Exercise Nutrition. I am a qualified personal trainer and registered with the British Dietetic Association. My full-time occupation is Health and Wellbeing Coach and Diabetes Practitioner.

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