

Recovery After Cesarean Section

During recovery you avoid movements that strain your abdominal muscles and incision. Protect your incision as well as your low back by using good body mechanics similar to those you used during pregnancy. As well, you can support your back during movement by tightening the pelvic floor (kegel) muscles and gently contracting the abdominal muscles.

Body Mechanic Tips

a. To get into bed: Sit at edge of bed, using your arms lower yourself to your side as you bring your legs onto the bed. Roll to your back with knees held hip width apart rather than separating legs.

To get out of bed: roll to your side, lower legs over the edge of the bed and push with your bottom elbow and top hand against the bed to sit upright.

b. To get out of a chair: come to the edge of the chair, keep your knees somewhat apart and squeeze buttocks as you stand up.

c. To get in a car: first sit down on the seat by backing in, keeping both knees together, pivot to get into car.

d. Bend your knees and hips when lifting. Avoid bending from the waist.

e. Avoid using one leg forcefully as this can put stress on abdominals and pelvic girdle i.e. do not use one leg to shove items on the floor; do not stand on one leg and put the other over a baby gate.

f. Hold a pillow against your abdomen if you should cough or sneeze to help decrease discomfort.

Regaining Abdominal Strength

In the first 6 weeks:

Many of the body/hormonal/postural changes that occur during pregnancy linger on several weeks after delivery. Because of this and the added fatigue of newborn care you need to gradually return to your regular exercise routine. To help your body transition use the same body mechanics you did when you were pregnant.

Contract your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles when lifting to help protect your low back as well as to begin to re-strengthen these areas. (Do this by gently tightening the vaginal and rectal muscles as if to hold in urine and gas while also pulling in abdominal muscles as if to zip up jeans. Breathe normally as you do this)

Try to do 10 pelvic floor contractions (squeeze the vaginal rectal muscles as if to hold in urine and gas) holding 5-10 counts while feeding your baby. Pelvic floor exercise in the immediate postpartum period helps re-strengthen these muscles, supports the spine/pelvic girdle and may help prevent urinary incontinence. (JOGC 517 June 2003)

Resume walking in 15 minute increments and gradually transition to brisk walking as your energy level returns.

Scar Mobilization: Massage gently along and across the length of the scar to promote mobility and uniform healing.

6-12 Weeks Post Partum

At 6 weeks post partum you can start to resume your regular exercise routines. Because you are still recovering from delivery you should exercise for less time and at a lower intensity than pre-pregnancy and gradually increase to your regular routine. The following exercise will help you re-strengthen the lower abdominals

1) One leg heel slide: Lay on back with knees bent. Contract pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as you slowly slide heel away from body and straighten leg. Relax. Contract muscles again as you slide heel back to start position. Begin with 10 on each side and work to 20-30.

2) Single leg fall out: Lay on back with knees bent, hip width apart and feet flat on floor. Breathe in, as you breathe out do a pelvic floor contraction and let one leg fall out to the side. Relax. Do a pelvic floor contraction and bring leg back to starting position. Begin with 10 repetitions on each leg and work to 20. When you can do 20 with each leg begin to do both legs together. Start with 10 and work to 20.

3) On hands and knees: On your bed get into a hands and knees position so that you are square: hands under shoulders and knees below hips. Allow back to relax into normal curve. Breathe in and as breathe out do a pelvic floor contraction and try to gently pull abdominal muscles toward spine. Begin with 10 repetitions hold 5, work to 2 sets of 10 repetitions, hold 10.

. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 267 Exercise During Pregnancy and the Postpartum period